THE MARXIST INTERPRETATION OF THE REFORMATION

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I certify that I have read this thesis and that in my opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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INTRODUCTION

This is a study dealing with the Marxist theory and practice of writing history. More specifically, it is a study in which the application of the Marxist theory of history is investigated in the Marxist historiography of the Reformation. The Marxist emphasis on the essential unity of the theory and practice of writing history very naturally suggested a division of the study into two parts: the first dealing with the Marxist philosophy of history, and the second dealing with the application of this theory to the period of the Reformation.

The Marxist interpretation of the Reformation is more than merely the result of the application of a theory of history to historical evidence, however, it is also the result of a new historical interest in social phenomenon increasingly evident after the French Revolution. This factor, together with Engels' admission that he took all his factual evidence relating to the Peasant War from Wilhelm Zimmermann's three-volume history of the Peasant War, made the somewhat lengthy enquiry into Zimmermann's factual accuracy and interpretation in Chapter IV necessary. What began as a routine investigation into the startlingly similar interpretations of Zimmermann and Engels led to even more startling discoveries with regards to Zimmermann's abuse of his sources.

To a certain extent, Zimmermann's errors and conscious falsifications made the whole Marxist interpretation questionable. To these errors, the Marxists have added the constricting influence of a theory of history derived from a philosophically prejudiced sociological analysis of 19th-century society. Because of these factual errors and the imposition of a theory derived from a sociological analysis of 19th-century society onto 16th-century society, it was deemed necessary to come to grips with the key aspects of the Marxist interpretation of the Reformation in critical concluding summations at the end of each chapter and particularly in Chapter X.

One last comment should be made regarding the spelling of the name Müntzer. Since Heinrich Böhmer, "Thomas Müntzer und das jüngste Deutschland,"[1] it has become customary to spell Müntzer's name with a "t." However, the Marxists, probably in respect to Engels' spelling, continued to spell the name without a "t" until Max Steinmetz, "Zur Entstehung der Müntzer-Legende,"[2] called their attention to this problem. Since that time both Marxist and non-Marxist, with a few exceptions,[3] have spelled Müntzer with a "t." Therefore, although we have spelled Müntzer's name with a "t" throughout, the spelling varies from author to author.

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[1] Geasammelte Aufsätze (Gotha, 1927), pp. 190-222.

[2] Fritz Klein und Joachim Streisand, eds., Beiträge zum neuen Geschichtsbild. Alfred Meusel zum 60 Geburtstag (Berlin, 1956), pp. 25-70.

[3] For example: Martin Lackner, "Von Thomas Münzer zum Münsterschen Aufstand," Jahrbuch des Vereines für Westfälische Kirchengeschichte, 53/54 (1960-1961), 9-24.

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PART ONE

THE THEORY OF HISTORY

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CHAPTER I

THE MARXIST INTERPRETATION OF HISTORY

A. Marx and Engels' Road to History

The Akademie-Verlag of Berlin, East Germany, has the following words on its insignia: theoria cum praxi. These words give clear expression to a philosophical commonplace held in Marxist circles: namely, that theory and practice, in this case of history, are two inseparable aspects of a greater whole. If the Marxists proudly proclaim this fact, we cannot but preface our study of the Marxist interpretation of the Reformation with a brief exposition of their philosophy of history. It is the purpose of this chapter, therefore, to make explicit that which is implicit in every Marxist interpretation of history.

Much has been written on the Marxist interpretation of history, both in a polemical and a non-polemical vein.[1] It is not the purpose of this chapter to add another analysis of this interpretation of history. We are concerned with the Marxist interpretation of history insofar as it will shed light on the Marxist interpretation of the Reformation.

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[1] See the bibliography in Jean-Yves Calvey, Karl Marx, Darstellung und Kritik seines Denkens (Freiburg i.B., 1964), pp. 541-57. (Translated from the 1963 French edition by Theodor Sapper.) Perhaps the best study is Gustav A. Wetter, Dialektischer und historischer Materialismus (Frankfurt/M., 1962).

Engels wrote the classic Marxist interpretation of the Reformation in 1850;[2] it is therefore necessary to trace the development of the interpretation in the writings of Marx and Engels to this point. However, as a preliminary study of one aspect of the Marxist interpretation of the Reformation has shown,[3] the subsequent pronouncements, particularly of Engels, on the philosophy of history, have had a decisive influence in producing certain nuances and changes in the present Marxist interpretation different from that of Engels' own. These nuances and changes in theory will, therefore, also have to be taken into consideration.

The problem of history and philosophy, and their relationship to one another, is an ancient one. Should philosophy, which is the discipline concerned with discovering the ultimate meaning in life itself, determine how we interpret historical facts, or do the historical facts we bring together interpret themselves? Does the one discipline arrive at the same general conclusions as the other, only from a different perspective? Or is it that history, being one of the Einzelwissenschaften, together with all the other Einzelwissenschaften, arrives at the same general conclusions reached by philosophy?[4] And even if we derive a philosophy of history from the study of history itself, can this philosophy of history be applied to all other, or even any other, historical situation than the one from which it was derived? If we can arrive at no philosophy of history even from the study of history itself, is there then no meaning to history? Is there no purpose, no goal to which the agonizing struggles of mankind must lead?

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[2] Friedrich Engels, "Der deutsche Bauernkrieg," Neue Rheinische Zeitung. Politisch-ökonomische Revue (Köln, 1850). (Hereafter cited as Rheinische Zeitung.)

[3] See my "Thomas Müntzer in Marxist Thought," Church History, XXXIV (September, 1965), 306-27. (Hereafter Church History will be cited as CH.)

To a large extent, mankind has been unwilling to believe that this world is not its home and that there is not some purpose, some goal which it is to achieve here on earth. Ancient philosophers expounded a cyclical theory of history; Christianity looked forward to the second coming of Christ and to the establishment of His Kingdom on earth; Enlightenment philosophers evolved a theory of secular progress; and the Marxists have discovered the classless society as the ultimate goal of history. And, of course, if we evolve a philosophy of history, if we find meaning in history, it is evident that we will ask of history that it bear out our philosophy. The Marxists are, therefore, not the first to have called upon history to aid them in making secure the foundations of their philosophy. The question that needs answering, however, is whether history can be employed to fulfill this function. The mere fact that different philosophies have, at different times, all been able to use history in this way should give us cause to ponder the problem.

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[4] Within Marxist ranks an active discussion is going on exactly on this problem. If history, whose method is inductive, contradicts the conclusions reached deductively by philosophy, what do we do? This is the problem faced by many Marxists today. See the recent study by Hans-Joachim Lieber, Philosophie und Geschichte im Marxismus-Leninismus (Berlin, 1965). (Hereafter cited as Philosophie und Geschichte.) See also Arthur P. Mendel, "Current Soviet Theory of History: New Trends or Old?" The American Historical Review, LXXII (October, 1966), I, 50-73.

The methods employed by philosophy and history are diametrically opposed to one another. Philosophy is a deductive discipline which usually proceeds from certain *a priori* concepts or premises. History, on the other hand, must of necessity be an inductive discipline because it proceeds from a given body of facts—a body of facts which may or may not be complete. The discovery of one or hitherto undiscovered facts may well throw an altogether different light on a given period of history, while the record of other facts may have been destroyed by time and be eternally lost to us. If, however, despite these objections, the conclusions reached from an unbiased study of history should happen to coincide with the conclusions of philosophy at all times and in all places, we could count ourselves more than fortunate. The truth is that the conclusions reached by history have, at best, only coincided with those reached by philosophy at some particular time under very particular historical circumstances. In other words, every philosophy has been able to point to some particular phase or aspect of history, which lent support to its particular Weltanschauung. What, then, has history proven? Only, in the words of Herbert Butterfield, that it is "as capable of varied philosophical interpretation as life seems to be."[5] The philosopher has asked too much of history, and the historian, feeling that he is wasting his time if he concentrates upon 'mere processes' has tried to answer philosophy's call. Yet, as Butterfield has stated, "the eliciting of general truths or of propositions claiming universal validity is the one kind of consummation which it is beyond the competence of history to achieve."[6]

It is a platitude to say that Karl Marx was a philosopher first and foremost—but it needs to be said here. In 1841 he received his doctorate in philosophy from the University of Jena for his dissertation entitled "Über die Differenz der demokritischen und epikureischen Naturphilosophie."[7] On September 2, 1842, Moses Hess[8] wrote enthusiastically to his friend, Berthold Auerbach, of Marx:

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[5] Herbert Butterfield, The Whig Interpretation of History (London, 1930), p. 71.

[6] Ibid., p. 65.

> You will certainly be pleased to get to know this man who now also belongs to our circle of friends and who will soon begin to lecture in Bonn . . . .
>
> His personality is such that, in spite of the fact that I am active with the same concerns, he has made a memorable impression upon me; in short, you can prepare yourself to meet the greatest, perhaps the _only_ living _real_ philosopher . . . .[9]

The adulation of Moses Hess was perhaps a little extravagant, but he recognized the philosopher in Marx clearly enough.

Philosophical systems, the young Marx stated, were produced in the minds of thinkers by the same 'spirit of an age' as that which produced the railroads built by the hands of laborers in the same age. Philosophy was not something otherworldly even though philosophical systems were formed in the minds of men before they could be brought down to earth and made to affect the 'real' conditions of the world.

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[7] See Karl Marx, _Frühe Schriften_, vol. I (Darmstadt, 1962), 18-106.

[8] For the importance of Moses Hess to the early German Communist movement see the _Vorwort_ to Auguste Cornu and Wolfgang Mönke, eds., _Moses Hess, Philosophische und Sozialistische Schriften 1837-1850_ (Berlin, 1961).

[9] Edmund Silberer, ed., _Moses Hess Briefwechsel_ (The Hague, 1959), p. 79.

Since every true philosophy was the intellectual quintessence of the 'spirit of the age,' the time would have to come when philosophy would come into contact and interaction with the 'real' world. At this point philosophy would become the philosophy of the world.[10]

What did Marx expect from philosophy? In the same article he continued: philosophy spoke only after study, she appealed only to reason, promised only truth, and called upon her practitioners to test every doubt.[11] Philosophy, therefore, could give the only correct answer to the problems faced by man on this earth.

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[10] Karl Marx, Article in "Rheinische Zeitung," Nr. 195 (July 14, 1842). Marx/Engels, Werke, I (Berlin, 1958), 97. (Hereafter cited as M/E, Werke.) Philosophy, like religion, was a reflection in the minds of men of the material circumstances they found themselves in. "Nicht das Bewusstsein bestimmt das Leben, sondern das Leben bestimmt das Bewusstsein." "Die Duetsche Idiologie," ibid., p. 27. But, as Marx and Engels realized later, philosophy and religion also had an independent existence after they had been conceived and very often continued to exercise their influence over man long after they no longer reflected the material conditions which had produced them. Thus Engels in his "Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy," Marx and Engels, On Religion (New York, 1964), p. 262: "Still higher ideologies, that is, such as are still further removed from the material, economic basis, take the form of philosophy and religion. Here the interconnection between conceptions and their material conditions of existence become more and more complicated, more and more obscured by intermediate links. But the interconnection exists."

[11] Article in M/E, Werke, I, 99.

But Marx was not in favor of approaching the world with another fixed dogmatic philosophy, although he had already taken his stand on the side of communism as the letter of Moses Hess, quoted earlier in this chapter, indicated, and as is seen from Marx's "Briefe aus den 'Deutsch-Französischen Jahrbüchern.'"[12] The approach needed was a critical one: Marx hoped to show the need for the creation of a communistic society through the criticism of existing social institutions. He hoped to do more. By laying bare (criticism) before mankind what was actually going on in the world, Marx expected man's consciousness to draw its own conclusions[13]—the same conclusions he had already drawn—namely, that communism had to be established.

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[12] "Ich bin daher nicht dafür, dass wir eine dogmatische Fahen aufpflanzen, im Gegenteil. Wir müssen den Dogmatikern nachzuhelfen suchen, dass sie ihre Sätze sich klarmachen. So ist namentlich der Kommunismus eine dogmatische abstraktion . . . ." *Ibid*., p. 344.

[13] "Es hindert uns also nichts, unsre Kritik an der Politik, an die Parteinahme in der Politik, also *wirkliche* Kämpfe anzuknüpfen und mit ihnen zu identifizieren. Wir treten dann nicht der Welt doktrinär mit einem neuen Prinzip entgegen: Hier ist die Wahrheit, hier kniee nieder! Wir entwickeln der Welt aus den Prinzipien der Welt neue Prinzipien. Wir sagen ihr nicht: Lass ab von deinen Kämpfen, sie sind dummes Zeug; wir wollen dir die wahre Parole des Kampfes zuschreien. Wir zeigen ihr nur, warum sie eigentlich kämpft, und das Bewisstsein ist eine Sache, die sie sich aneignen muss, wenn sie auch nicht will." *Ibid*., p. 345.

What was the basic problem Marx was trying to solve? The problem was man himself; something tragic had happened to him. Man was essentially a social animal, but he had become alienated from society and from himself. Not only had man become alienated from himself, but even his work, the labor of his hands, had become a mere product, bought and sold, and was no longer an integral part of him. Even worse—man had become subordinated to the product he had created. He had been further alienated from his essential self by the debasing nature of his work. Forced to labor because of his need to subsist, man had become passive to his alienation and had sunk to the level of an animal. He no longer was a creative member of society—the goal Marx had set for man—but had become dehumanized, depersonalized, and alienated from himself.[14]

The reason for this alienation was obvious: it lay in the capitalistic mode of production. The industrial war, in which capitalistic industry was caught, had to be fought without consideration for the worker. In order to compete, companies kept wages as low as possible, and, since there would always be a surplus of labor,[15] the workers would continue to fight one another to get work merely in order to subsist. As a result, there was no love lost between the workers competing for work and between these workers and the capitalistic owners. The latter treated the workers as mere "instruments of production," not as human beings, for the workers were to produce as much as possible at the least possible cost.[16]

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[14] Marx, "Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte," Frühe Schriften, I, pp. 559-75. See also Erich Thier, Das Menschenbild des jungen Marx (Göttingen, 1959); and Howard L. Parsons, "The Prophetic Mission of Karl Marx," The Journal of Religion, XLIX (January, 1964), 52.

[15] See Marx's reasoning, Frühe Schriften, I, 513-14.

From the foregoing analysis, it should be clear that Marx saw the predicament of man in the context of 19th-century industrial society. His diagnosis was in terms of that society, and the solution he offered was in terms of the same society. But behind the sociological solution Marx proposed for the cure of man's disease lay his philosophical presupposition concerning man--his basic humanism.[17] We have seen that he believed the end of man was to become a free, productive member in a society where the labor of his hands would remain an integral part of himself, that man should once again become a creative being in harmony with himself and with nature.

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[16] *Ibid*., pp. 524-25.

[17] "Man, for Marx, was the root and goal of all social evolution. The goal of human development, as Marx saw it, was essentially the same as it was for the great humanists of the Renaissance and Enlightenment from Erasmus to Spinoza and Goethe." Erich Fromm in the Forward to T.B. Bottomore and Maximilien Rubel, eds., *Karl Marx, Selected Writings in Sociology and Social Philosophy* (New York, 1956), p. xiv. (Hereafter cited as *Karl Marx, Selected Writings*.)

How was this to be achieved? Since it was the capitalistic mode of production which had brought about the alienation of man in the first place, that mode of production would have to be changed. But what should replace it?

As we have seen, Marx had arrived at the conclusion that communism would solve man's problem before he turned to the diagnosis and criticism of contemporary society. His sociological observations only strengthened this conviction. Now he stated that capitalism, of itself, would lead to communism,[18] and this communism, passing through various stages, would lead to that true communism which would put man into harmony with himself once again. Since the capitalistic mode of production and consumption was but an expression and extension of the principle of private property, private property was the tangible, material expression of the alienated human life. The abolition of private property would, therefore, bring about the reintegration of man with himself and with nature.[19]

Already in the "Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte," Marx expressed the belief that the movement of history was towards the realization of this true communism.[20] History was moving toward its goal of the classless society, but exactly how was it moving in this direction and how would it achieve its goal? Marx gave his answer in this way. Proceeding from the contemporary political situation in which the ruling class suppressed the common man, Marx stated that the real emancipation of man could not be achieved until the power of the state was in the hands of a class which aimed at this emancipation because it found itself in the same situation as the whole of society. During the French Revolution the bourgeoisie had found itself in this situation. At that time it had gained control of the state, but it had failed to free all of society. The working class was now in opposition to the bourgeoisie, and it was from this class that Marx expected the emancipation of man to come.[21]

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[18] See his reasons in Frühe Schriften, I, 590-94.

[19] See especially ibid., pp. 593-95.

[20] Ibid., p. 594.

Thus, although Marx believed in a humanism, at the moment man was held in the grip of material pressures. Man was a being alienated from himself because the means of production had gained control over him and not man control over the means of production. When, however, in the true communist society of the future, the means of production would be controlled by man, then he would be able to emancipate himself. Until that time, the actions of man would be determined by the material conditions in which he found himself--by the capitalistic mode of production. Marx's cure for the plight of man in capitalistic society, therefore, arose out of a combination of three basic factors: his humanism, his criticism of industrial society, and his hope for a better future.

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[21] M/E, Werke, I, 388-91.

Marx had assumed that his criticism of capitalistic society would lead man's consciousness to the conclusion that the communist society was the only possible solution to his problem, and that this consciousness would lead to social change. But social change failed to be forthcoming. Thus Marx turned to economic and historical studies upon which to rest the conclusions he had reached as a philosopher and as a social critic. This is very clearly pointed out in a letter from Moses Hess to Marx of July 28, 1846. In this letter Hess stated:

> I am in complete agreement with the point of view you expressed recently to Daniels concerning our communistic writings. Just as it was necessary to begin our efforts to establish communism by criticising the German ideology, even so it is now imperative that we found these same efforts on historical and economic premises, otherwise we will neither be able to come to grips with the 'socialists' nor with our enemies of other shades and colors. I have myself turned exclusively to the study of economics and anticipate the appearance of your work with eagerness (Kritik der Politik und Nationalökonomie), which I intend to study thoroughly . . . .[22]

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[22] Moses Hess Briefwechsel, p. 165.

And so Marx turned to history and economics with the intention of making these two disciplines prove the conclusions he had reached thus far. That Marx should find some support for these conclusions in contemporary history and the contemporary economic situation is clear, for his philosophical presuppositions had been supplemented by a sociological analysis of 19th-century capitalistic society.

Before we go any further in this investigation, we must ask ourselves, what would happen to the system Marx had built if his concept of man, his humanism, were wrong? Let us assume for a moment that Marx had diagnosed his society correctly and had prescribed the correct cure. Let us assume further that he had read history correctly and that his prediction of the classless society of the future was correct—that communism was the economic system of the future. What would happen if man, in spite of the fact that he controlled the mode of production, was sinful in his very nature as Christianity teaches.[23] Would the state wither away? Would man live at peace with man? Would his alienation be cured? And if the whole Marxist system hinges on this pivotal point, is it scientific in any sense? Marx built on a humanism which he inherited from the Enlightenment and the French Materialists and found originally in ancient Greek philosophy. He failed to take seriously, however, the opposite point of view expounded already in the Old Testament.[24]

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[23] This question is asked here appropriately because the Christian teaching of the 'fall of man' and his redemption through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was a crucial conviction of the 16th-century Reformers.

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[24] How crucial for Marx's whole system his humanism is, and how he deduces everything from it, is shown in the following passage from "Die heilige Familie," 1845: "Es bedarf keines grossen Scharfsinnes, um aus den Lehren des Materialismus von der ursprünglichen Güte und gleichen intelligenten Begabung der Menschen, der Allmacht der Erfahrung, Gewohnheit, Erziehung, dem Einflusse der äusseren Umstände auf den Menschen, der hohen Bedeutung der Industrie, der Berechtigung des Genusses etc. seinen notwendigen Zusammenhang mit dem Kommunismus und Sozialismus einzusehen. Wenn der Mensch aus der Sinnenwelt und der Erfahrung in der Sinnenwelt alle Kenntnis, Empfindung etc. sich bildet, so kommt es also darauf an, die empirische Welt so einzurichten, dass er das wahrhaft Menschliche in ihr erfährt, sich angewöhnt, dass er sich als Mensch erfährt. Wenn das wohlverstandene Interesse das Prinzip aller Moral ist, so kommt es darauf an, dass das Privatinteresse des Menschen mit dem menschlichen Interesse zusammenfällt. Wenn der Mensch unfrei im materialistischen Sinne, d.h. frei ist, nicht durch die negative Kraft, dies und jenes zu meiden, sondern durch die positive Macht, seine wahre Individualität geltend zu machen, so muss man nicht das Verbrechen am Einzelnen strafen, sondern die antisozialen Geburtsstätten des Verbrechens zerstören und jedem den sozialen Raum für seine wesentliche Lebensäusserung geben. Wenn der Mensch von den Umständen gebildet wird, so muss man die Umstände menschlich bilden. Wenn der Mensch von Natur gesellschaftlich ist, so entwickelt er seine wahre Natur erst in der Gesellschaft, und man muss die Macht seiner Natur nicht an der Macht des einselnen Individuums, sondern an der Macht der Gesellschaft messen." M/E, Werke, II (1959), 138.

This is not the place to answer the question—what is man; for both the question and the answers which have been given are as old as man himself and have vacillated between the humanism of classical Greek philosophy and the Hebrew doctrine of the 'fall of man.' Were we to attempt an answer, we would be but choosing one position of many. Marx's humanism was that of Greek philosophy, but it was combined with an idea similar to that of the Hebrew doctrine of the 'fall of man.' Man had fallen from his original state, not because of his inner self, his free will, or his evil nature, but because of outward circumstances. Therefore one had but to remedy these outward, 'real' circumstances in order to allow man to become his true self again. This could be accomplished in this world if a true communist society could be erected, and as Marx saw things, this was the society which must of necessity evolve out of capitalistic society. Man, in this situation, did not need a gracious God who had revealed Himself to mankind in mercy through the sacrifice of His Son, Jesus Christ, upon the cross, to speak in the language of Luther.[25] Man was not sinful by nature, he was only under the control of a malignant mode of production. It was his destiny to realize his true self here on earth, not in the heaven of man's imagination; man's goal was here—to be achieved in human society.[26]

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[25] It is for this reason that Marx can say: "Der Kommunismus beginnt sogleich (Owen) mit dem Atheismus, der Atheismus ist zunächst noch weit entfernt Kommunismus zu sein, wie jener Atheismus mehr noch eine Abstraktion ist." "Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte," Frühe Schriften, I, 595.

Marx and Engels now turned to history. Already in the "Deutsche Ideologie" (1845-1846) they had begun to apply the categories they had developed through their criticism of contemporary society to past society. They failed to ask, however, whether these categories could be applied to the history of former times without distorting that history. But the most succinct formulation of their interpretation of history was contained in the "Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei" of 1847 which we shall use for our delineation here.[27]

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[26] If we have spoken only of Marx heretofore, but now begin to speak of Marx and Engels, it is for the following reasons: (1) The problem of the relationship of philosophy to history and vice-versa is seen most clearly in the writings of Marx. (2) Engels, although he contributed somewhat to this development, was influenced decisively by his encounter with Marx and began to work very closely together with him as early as 1844 in "Die heilige Familie." From this point on the two were inextricably linked together in their writings. For the development of Engels prior to his encounter with Marx, see Karl Kupisch, Vom Pietismus zum Kommunismus (Berlin, 1953), pp. 13-70. That Marx was not the only one to influence Engels in the direction of communism, however, is seen from a letter of Hess to Auerbach of June 19, 1843: "Ein anderer von den Hegel'schen ist jetzt in England (Engels) und schreibt ein grosses Werk über diese Anglegenheit. Mit diesem stehe ich in enger Verbindung. Im vorigen Jahre nämlich, als ich im Begriffe war, nach Paris zu reisen kam er von Berlin durch Köln; wir sprachen über die Zeitfragen und er, ein Anno I Revolutionär, schied von mir als allereifrigster Kommunist. So richte ich Verwüstungen an . . . ." Moses Hess Briefwechsel, p. 103.

[27] M/E, Werke, IV (1959), 463-74.

From their analysis of 19th-century society Marx and Engels had arrived at the conclusion that the most important aspect of the age was the class struggle. This insight was now applied to all of history; the history of every society heretofore had been the history of the class struggle. Freeman and slave, patrician and plebian, baron and serf, master craftsman and journeyman, in short, suppressor and suppressed had stood in enduring opposition to one another and were constantly at war with one another.[28]

Each period of history had its ruling class which was the product of a given mode of production. When this mode of production changed, the ruling class also changed. With the coming of capitalistic industry and the consequent dissolution of feudal guild manufacturing, the feudal ruling class had had to give way to the bourgeoisie. Meanwhile, the bourgeoisie continued to grow in strength and consolidate its political position in direct proportion to the increase and expansion of its industry. Wherever the bourgeoisie had come to power all feudal remnants had been ruthlessly destroyed. But in order to retain this political power and position, the bourgeoisie had to continue to expand and increase its production. This would naturally lead to overproduction and crisis in capitalism which would grow more and more severe each time they would recurr. It was these crises which would be the nemesis of capitalism.[29]

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[28] Ibid., p. 463.

Capitalism, however, had not only prepared its own destruction, it had also produced the class which would use these crises as weapons against the bourgeoisie—the proletariat. This class would increase in number with the expansion of capitalism. And as capitalism expanded, all those who had previously belonged to the middle class would be forced down into the proletariat.

At first, the proletariat had fought against the capitalist alone, but he was learning, and soon the workers of a factory would band together, then they would be joined by others, until the capitalist would be opposed by large bands of workers. Slowly the workers would begin to rise in occasional revolts, realize their power in occasional victories, and begin to band together into a unified class. Once this had happened, the proletariat would become a political party.[30]

With the rise to power of the proletariat, the bourgeoisie would begin its decay. Some of its members would join the proletariat, realizing, through their theoretical knowledge of the total historical movement, that it was the class of the future.

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[29] Ibid., pp. 464-68.

[30] Ibid., pp. 469-71.

Those who attempted to halt this progress, this movement of history toward the rule of the proletariat, were reactionaries because they did not realize in which direction history was moving.[31]

All previous classes, when they had come to power, had attempted to consolidate the position and power they had already achieved. Not so the proletariat. The only way the proletariat could gain control of the productive forces would be by destroying all previously existing means of acquisition. The proletariat had nothing to protect and everything to destroy.[32]

All previous revolutions had been made by minority groups in the interest of minority groups. The proletarian revolution, however, was the independent revolution of an overwhelming majority in the interest of that majority. This proletariat, the lowest class of capitalist society, could not revolt without at the same time destroying the ideological superstructure which the ruling bourgeois class had created. Thus it would rid itself of the restrictive forces of production as well as the bourgeois ideology at the same time.[33]

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[31] Ibid., pp. 471-72.

[32] It is not yet too clear exactly how and why the proletariat will bring about the communistic mode of production. Ibid., p. 472.

[33] Ibid., pp. 472-73.

The change of power from the hands of the bourgeoisie to those of the proletariat would not be a peaceful one. The struggle had already been going on covertly, but it would soon erupt into open revolt on the part of the proletariat. This revolt could only end in the defeat of the bourgeoisie. Then the classless society would come into being.[34]

These were the broad outlines history had taken on for Marx and Engels by the time Engels came to write his Bauernkrieg in 1850. Neither Marx nor Engels had really done any serious historical research as yet,[35] but both were to turn to history as a result of the failure of the 1848 revolution in Germany—Engels to the Peasant

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[34] Ibid., p. 473.

[35] Engels himself stated in the 1895 preface to a new edition of Marx's, "Die Klassenkämpfe in Frankreich 1848 bis 1850:" "Die hiermit neu herausgegebene Arbeit von Marx' erster Versuch, ein Stück Zeitgeschichte vermittelst seiner materialistischen Auffassungsweise aus der gegebenen ökonomischen Lage zu erklären. Im 'Kommunistischen Manifest' war die Theorie in grossen Umrissen auf die ganze neuere Geschichte angewandt, in Marx' und meinen Artikeln der 'Neuen Rheinischen Zeitung' war sie fortwährend benutzt worden zur Deutung gleichzeitiger politischer Ereignisse. Hier dagegen handelte es sich darum, im Verlauf einer mehrjährigen, für ganz Europa sowohl kritischen wie typischen Entwicklung den inneren Kausalzusammenhang nachzuweisen, also, im Sinn des Verfassers, die politischen Begebenheiten zurückzuführen auf Wirkungen von in letzter Instanz ökonomischen Ursachen." M/E, Werke, VII (1960), 511.

War of 1525 and Marx to the 'class struggles' in France between 1848 and 1850. It is not without significance that both turned to revolutionary periods in history as a result of the failure of 1848. After all, it was to be through revolution that the victory of the proletariat would be realized.

B. Deductive rather than Inductive History

No matter how Marx and Engels arrived at the categories, or the theory, they now applied to history, the fact remains, when they came to the study of history, they came with a theory which explained the historical facts.[36] And although Marx and Engels could say, in "Die deutsche Ideologie," that their starting point was not a philosophical or dogmatic one, they frankly admitted they were proceeding from *a priori* ideas and concepts.[37] These *a priori* ideas and concepts, as we have attempted to show, were drawn from philosophy and from their criticism of 19th-century capitalistic society.[38]

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[36] Engels stated in 1895: ". . . Im 'Kommunistischen Manifest' war die Theorie in grossen Umrissen auf die ganze neuere Geschichte angewandt . . . ." *Ibid*. See also Engels' 1870 Introduction to his *Bauernkrieg*, *ibid*., pp. 531-32.

[37] "Die Voraussetzungen, mit denen wir beginnen, sind keine willkürlichen, keine Dogmen, es sind wirkliche Voraussetzungen, von denen man nur in der Einbildung abstraieren kann. Es sind die wirklichen Individuen, ihre Aktion and ihre materiellen Lebensbedingungen, sowohl die vorgefundenen wie die durch ihre Aktion erzeugten. Diese Voraussetzungen sind also auf rein empirischen Wege konstatierbar." *Ibid*., III, 20.

In their study of history, Marx and Engels now proceeded from the general to the particular, from the theory to the facts.[39] They consciously diagnosed historical epochs by applying their theoretical yardstick to these epochs. Historical materialism, as Engels was later to call the theory, is much more than a methodological device, as some Marxists have recently tried to maintain.[40] That this is so is implicit in the Marxist criticism of non-Marxist historiography which, some maintain, at its best, is able to discover individual facts but cannot place these in their proper context.[41]

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[38] Reinhold Niebuhr in his Introduction to Marx and Engels, On Religion, comes to the same conclusion. "Marx distinguishes between two forms of French materialism. He affirms that Cartesian materialism merges into natural science. But the other branch concerned with historical problems, 'leads directly to socialism and communism.' He then proceeds to prove deductively, not empirically, how this comes about." p. x.

[39] See Engels' own admission above, n. 35.

[40] This argument comes mainly from East European Marxists.

[41] We shall discuss these problems in greater detail in the second chapter of this study.

What were these a priori ideas, these presuppositions, which Marx and Engels brought with them to their study of history? Perhaps the most important one was that it was not the consciousness of man that determined his life, but on the contrary, it was his way of life that determined his consciousness.[42] In order to 'make history' man had to be able to live; in other words, some form of a material base had to be present before man could exist. This involved a certain form or mode of production, no matter how primitive, and it was this form of production which determined man's consciousness.[43] All thought, therefore, could be explained if one understood the 'real' history of mankind--the history of the mode of production, the history of economic development.[44] This, of course, was why Marx spent so much time on his Das Kapital.

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[42] "Die deutsche Ideologie," M/E, Werke, III, 27.

[43] Ibid., p. 28. We shall have to deal more fully with this problem later on in this chapter.

[44] Thus Ernst Werner can say: "Für die Marxisten ist unter diesem Aspekt die Geschichte der Gesellschaft vor allem die Geschichte der Entwicklung der Produktion . . . ." "Der Florentiner Frühkapitalismus in marxistischer Sicht," Studi Medievali, I (1960), 661.

A second presupposition Marx and Engels brought to their study of history was that the history of mankind was the history of class warfare.[45] Every mode of production brought to power a specific social class, but thus far every class had only represented minority groups. Society was thus divided into ruler and ruled, suppressor and suppressed. This class warfare did not only take place on the economic level, but on all levels, ideological as well as political. Since all thought was but the reflection of the material realm, and this material realm showed that one mode of production came into conflict with another, eventually superseding it, it was clear that the realm of politics, philosophy, religion, morality, and the like, had to reflect this conflict.

The idea of the class conflict, combined with the idea of progress which Marx and Engels inherited from the Enlightenment, led directly to the concept of dialectual progress in history. Each mode of production, each economic and social system, was in time, superseded by another which already began to develop while the former was still in existence. The two systems thus came into conflict with one another, the new one displacing the old in due time, most often by revolution. Each time a new mode of production was established a new class came to power, society had moved a giant step closer to the final goal of all history—the classless society.

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[45] See above, p. 10. Marx immediately recognized the importance of Darwin's work for his theory of the class war: "Sehr bedeutend ist Darwins Schrift und passt mir als naturwissenschaftliche Unterlage des geschichtlichen Klassenkampfes . . . ." Marx to Lassalle, January 16, 1861. Marx/Engels, Ausgewählte Briefe (Zurich, 1934), p. 96.

Within each phase of this development, the progress of history was seen as a development by clearly defined periods which usually began and ended with a revolution, there were progressive and reactionary forces at work. At the beginning of the capitalistic era, for example, the bourgeoisie had been a very progressive and revolutionary force because it was the class of the future, while the feudal class, trying to retain its economic and political power, became the reactionary force because it did not want to make way for the bourgeoisie. In the same way, the bourgeoisie would one day be superseded by the proletariat and would become the reactionary power. The terms, reactionary and progressive, therefore, have very definite meanings for the Marxists, meanings which are determined by their theory of the dialectical progress of history.

We have seen that Marx and Engels regarded the class coming to power on the back of a new mode of production as revolutionary. The new economic system undermined the existing one, and the new class with its new ideology turned against the old one. The very fact that the old class tried desperately to retain its position and political power, and the new class was trying to grasp political power in order to secure its position, brought the two classes into mortal conflict. There was no room for compromise in the theory. These revolutionary periods, of course, were the crucial periods of history for Marx and Engels, not least of all because they themselves were actively involved in the revolution of 1848 in the hope that it would lead to the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Because Marx and Engels postulated this future revolution of the proletariat, Marxist historiography, from Marx and Engels on, has shown a decided predilection for revolutionary periods. These revolutions came and went according to certain rules,[46] but it is clear that Marx and Engels did not exclude the human element in bringing about a successful revolution.[47] They themselves became very much involved in organizing the proletariat into a strong political party. And because they were so involved politically, they studied past revolutions in order to determine how best to bring about the proletarian revolution.

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[46] Wilhelm Weitling complained to Moses Hess of Marx and Engels on March 31, 1846, that they maintained: "Von der Verwirklichung des Kommunismus kann zunächst nicht die Rede sein; die Bourgeoisie muss erst ans Ruder kommen . . . . Aber als ich in Brüssel vernahm, dass die Systemgegner gerade die grossartigste Systemarbeit in wohlbezahlter Übersetzungen vornehmen . . . ." Moses Hess Briefwechsel, pp. 151-52.

[47] "Der Zweck des Kommunistischen Bundes ist, durch alle Mittel der Propaganda und des politischen Kampfes die Zertrümmerung der alten Gesellschaft--und Sturz der Bourgeoisie--, die geistige, politische und ökonomische Befreiung des Proletariats, die kommunistische Revolution durchzuführen . . . ." "Statuten des Kommunistischen Bundes," M/E, Werke, VII, 566.

One last Marxist presupposition is the presupposition that the proletariat is the class of the future and will, when it comes to power, usher in the classless society. This is perhaps the most vulnerable of all Marxist presuppositions, yet it has led to what the Marxists now call Parteilichkeit in Marxist historiography.[48] Since it has been 'scientifically' proven that the proletariat is the class which, so to speak, will inherit the earth and the fulness thereof, history must take the side of this class or else it must of necessity be 'reactionary' history. The consequences this theory had, and still has, for the Marxist interpretation of history was manifested already in Engels' Bauernkrieg of 1850 and will become obvious in the second part of this study. Here we must turn to a more detailed study of these sociological categories, or, as we have termed them, historical presuppositions.[49]

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[48] See for example, Jürgen Kuczynski, "Parteilichkeit und Objektivität in Geschichte und Geschichtschreibung," Fritz Klein und Joachim Streisand, eds., Beiträge zum neuen Geschichtsbild (Berlin, 1956), pp. 9-26. (Hereafter cited as Beiträge zum Geschichtsbild.)

C. Material Base and Ideological Superstructure

Because of its obvious importance for the Marxist interpretation of the Reformation, we must discuss in somewhat greater detail the Marxist theory of the ideological superstructure of a given age as the reflection of the material base or mode of production of that age. Since religion falls into the category of ideological superstructure, and since it ostensibly played such a crucial role in the

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[49] It is becoming ever more clear that not only are these categories bound to Marx's contemporary environment but even the content is bound to it. Thus, with regard to feudalism, Ferdinand Seibt wrote. ". . . Otto Brunner . . . zeigte 1958, dass der wissenschaftliche Begriff vom Feudalismus seinen Inhalt ganz bestimmten historischen Bedingungen um die Wende zum 19. Jh. bei Aufklärern, Sozialisten und Marxisten verdankt. Brunner machte überhaupt hier und an anderer Stelle die ganze Entwicklung des historischen Materialismus abhängig vom Entstehen einer Wirtschaftsgesellschaft, und erst 'aus der Sicht um 1800' sei auch eine Klassenstruktur dieser Wirtschaftsgesellschaft überhaupt denkbar geworden." "Probleme des böhmischen 'Feudalismus' in der marxistischen Mediaevistik," Vierteljahrsschrift fur Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte, 55 (1964), 19-20.

Auseinandersetzungen of the Reformation period, we have no choice but to try to become as enlightened as possible as to its theoretical role in the Marxist interpretation of history.

The central problem here, of course, is an epistemological one: how does man know. In the words of Reinhold Niebuhr,

> The logic of the Marxist viewpoint is clear. Any theory which takes the problem of knowledge seriously enough to distinguish between the self as object and the self as knower is potentially idealism: it ends by giving primacy to the theoretical "copies of reality" rather than to reality itself. An empirical approach to epistemology on the other hand is identified with "materialism," that is, a philosophical naturalism and a vaguely conceived epistemology which guarantees the primacy of "reality vis à vis the fanciful copies of reality." Thus we arrive at absolute truth in the name of science against absolute pretensions in the name of religion and idealism.[50]

Thus Marx could maintain that "it is not the consciousness of man which determines his way of life, but on the contrary, his way of life which determines his consciousness,"[51] and it was the material mode of production which determined man's way of life.

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[50] R. Niebuhr, Introduction to Marx and Engels, On Religion, p. x.

The epistemological conclusion, arrived at by means of a deductive process from a materialistic point of departure, did not, however, really solve the problem. In reality, in the study of history, the problem becomes much more involved, especially when one begins to study individuals in their relation to their surroundings. And it is clear that Marx and Engels began to realize this as time went on. Marx and Engels' epistemology, for example, did not solve the problem of intellectual traditions (religious or philosophical) and their effects upon the thought of succeeding generations. Did an entirely new ideology arise with the emerging of a new mode of production and the subsequent rise to power of a new class? Or was the existing ideology merely modified? And if the basic questions of religion and philosophy have remained the same since earliest times, what 'real' changes have new modes of production produced?

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[51] Bottomore and Rubel, in their Introduction to Marx, Selected Writings, p. 4, translate "Leben," which I have translated with "way of life," with "social being." It is clear, however, from the preceding sentences that Marx is here referring to man's material basis. "Sie [mankind] haben keine Geschichte, sie haben keine Entwickling, sondern die ihre materielle Produktion und ihren materiellen Verkehr entwickelnden Menschen ändern mit dieser ihrer Wirklichkeit auch ihr Denken und die Produkte ihres Denkens." "Die deutsche Ideologie," M/E, Werke, III, p. 27. Then follows the passage cited above. Bottomore and Rubel go on to say, ". . . [this] is not a philosophical (epistemological) proposition, but a statement about the genesis of ideological constructions, law, politics, religion, art, and philosophy." Marx, Selected Writings, p. 4. But Marx was more aware that he was a materialist than Bottomore and Rubel seem to be. In a letter to Kugelmann of March 6, 1868, he wrote: "He knows very well that my method of development is not Hegelian, since I am a materialist and Hegel is an idealist. Hegel's dialectic is the basic form of all dialectic, but only after it has been stripped of its mystical form, and it is precisely this which distinguishes my method." Marx-Engels, Selected Correspondence (New York, 1934), p. 234.

In "Die deutsche Ideologie" Marx and Engels stated that ever since the division of physical from mental work, man's consciousness had been able to convince itself that it was something else than the consciousness of 'real' life, that it was a reality in its own right. From this moment on it was able to emancipate itself from the 'real' world and proceed to the creation of 'pure' theory, 'pure' theology, philosophy, morality, and so forth. These 'pure' ideological expressions could, according to Marx and Engels, come into contradiction with the existing social conditions if the latter were to come into contradiction with the existing mode of production. In fact, they said, these three aspects of life, the mode of production, the existing social relationships, and the consciousness of man, must of necessity come into contradiction with each other until this artificial division of physical and mental work would be abolished—until the realization of Marx's communist society. In the same passage Marx admitted that man's consciousness could, once it had become divorced from real life, carry on an existence by itself.[52] All of these contradictions could be traced back to private property.[53]

Marx and Engels did not state that ideologies were merely the reflections of 'real' life or of the mode of production; there was an intermediate level which influenced the cognition of man—society. They thus maintained that the mode of production determined the social structure and this social structure, the ruling class, in turn determined the ruling ideology. What was more, once these ideologies had been formed, they exerted a certain reaction upon the material base. And the only way these ruling ideologies could be destroyed was by changing the material base, the mode of production. It was for this reason that Marx and Engels could say that revolution, not the criticism of ideologies, was the driving force behind history, as well as behind philosophy, religion and the like.[54]

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[52] Marx states quite expressly, "Übrigens ist es ganz einerlei, was das Bewusstsein alleine anfängt . . . ." M/E, Werke, III, 31-32.

[53] "Die freilich noch sehr rohe, latente Sklaverei in der Familie [the first form of society for Marx] ist das erste Eigentum, das übrigens hier schon vollkommen der Definition der modernen Ökonomie entspricht, nach der es die Verfügung über fremde Arbeitskraft ist. Übrigens sind Teilung der Arbeit und Privateigentum identische Ausdrücke—in dem Einen wird in Beziehung auf die Tätigkeit dasselbe ausgesagt, was in dem Andern in bezug auf das Produkt der Tätigkeit ausgesaft wird." Ibid., p. 32.

Each new generation faced a given mode of production and certain ideological traditions of life. This given mode of production, as well as the ideology, were influenced by the new generation in the same way as the new generation was influenced by them and had to use them as their point of departure. These given conditions of life also determined whether or not the periodically recurring revolutionary upheavals would be strong enough to overthrow the existing material basis of society and thus create a new society. Not the idea of revolution or communism brought about this revolution—for these ideas were as old as mankind—but the stage of development society had reached.[55]

Men have often convinced themselves, or have been convinced, that the history of their period was motivated by 'purely' political or religious motives. However, these were in reality only 'forms' of the 'real' motive forces. The historian, who had come to write the history of these periods, had accepted this reasoning and thus had not really touched the 'ultimate' motivating factor.[56] Marx and Engels, and the Marxists after them, have therefore always been able to discern the 'ultimate' motivating factors of a period much more clearly than the period itself. The disconcerting thing is, however, that the 'ultimate' motivating factor is always the same.

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[54] *Ibid*., pp. 37-38.

[55] *Ibid*., p. 38.

[56] *Ibid*., p. 39.

Not all ideologies were equally distant reflections of reality, however; some mirrored reality much more clearly than others. Politics, for example, was closest to reality,[57] much closer than religion and philosophy.[58] Because the connection between religion, philosophy, and their material base was not immediately obvious, Marx and Engels had to postulate 'intermediate links' which tended to obscure the connection.[59] What these 'intermediate links' were was never really clarified.

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[57] "Während die Franzosen und Engländer wenigstens an der politischen Illusion, die der Wirklichkeit noch am nächsten steht, halten . . . ." Ibid.

[58] "Still higher ideologies, that is, such as are still further removed from the material, economic basis, take the form of philosophy and religion." Engels, "Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy," Marx and Engels, On Religion, p. 262.

[59] "Here between religion, philosophy, and the material base the interconnection between conceptions and their material conditions of existence become more and more complicated, more and more obscured by intermediate links. But the interconnection exists." Ibid.

From the study of the Marxist interpretation of history it is clear, however, that Marxist practitioners of the historical craft have not really understood, in all its details, Marx and Engels' theory of material base and ideological superstructure. It was enough for them that they recognized that everything rested on the material base and that everything was derived, in one way or another, from this base. They established a monistic materialistic interpretation of history which appeared reasonable enough as long as they dealt with the history of capitalism or some other strictly economic aspect of history. But as soon as they tried to bring the ideological superstructure into relation with the material base, they either fell into meaningless generalizations or became involved in hopeless contradictions.

In the last years of his life Engels himself began to recognize that the relation of the material base to ideological superstructure was not as easily solved as had at first seemed to be the case. Many of the letters from the last years of his life, particularly 1889 to 1895, were dedicated to exactly this topic. The central problem confronting him was the question of intellectual traditions and how the economic base affected these traditions.

Engels began with a confession, a confession of the first importance to all Marxist theoreticians of basis and superstructure. He confessed that ". . . in regard to theory there is still much to be done, especially in the sphere of economic history and its connection with political history, with the history of law, of religion, of literature and of culture in general, where only a clear theoretical vision can guide the way through a labyrinth of facts."[60] Indeed much remained to be done in the theoretical field; but it seems Engels was not much more optimistic about the application of the theory to the study of history, and well he might be if the theory itself had been found wanting. He complained that the younger generation of Marxists placed much more stress on the economic aspect than was due it because they had not really understood the theory.[61] But the blame for this also rested partly on his own and Marx's shoulders, for in their early writings they had often overstated the case for economics.[62]

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[60] Engels to Conrad Schmidt, October 17, 1889, Selected Correspondence, p. 475.

[61] "In general the word materialist serves many of the younger writers in Germany as a mere phrase with which anything and everything is labelled without further study; they stick on this label and then think the question disposed of." Engels to Schmidt, August 5, 1890, *ibid.*, p. 473. In like manner he wrote to Bloch, October 21, 1890: "Unfortunately, however, it happens only too often that people think they have fully understood a theory and can apply it without more ado from the moment they have mastered its main principles, and those even not always correctly. And I cannot exempt many of the more recent 'Marxists' from this reproach, for the most wonderful rubbish has been produced from this quarter too." *Ibid.*, p. 477.

In 1890, he wrote a certain Conrad Schmidt that although ". . . the material form of existence was the primum agens this did not exclude spheres of ideas reacting upon it in their turn, though with a secondary effect."[63] The Marxist conception of history, however, was above all a guide to study, not a lever for the construction of history. The different formations of society would have to be studied individually before one could draw conclusions as to the political, civil-legal, aesthetic, philosophic and religious superstructure. He frankly admitted that, as yet, nothing had been done in this regard. It was no wonder outsiders could ridicule the materialist conception of history.[64]

It is clear that Engels was becoming a little uneasy about what resulted when a theory was imposed upon the facts of history. He began to call for an inductive study of history but still assumed that this inductive study of history would bear out his theoretical presuppositions. In the succeeding letters on the subject of material base and ideological superstructure, he became more and more defensive, but hung on desperately to the basic assumption that 'ultimately' and 'finally' the means of production was the decisive element in history. Had he let this go, meaning would have gone out of history for him. He would then have had to deal with a 'labyrinth of facts' from which he would have had to try to determine the relative importance of basis and superstructure.[65] Engels was like a medieval chronicler who saw God as the 'final' or 'first' cause of all historical events, and who unlike Sir Francis Bacon, was not willing to give up speculating about the 'first' cause in order to content himself with the 'secondary' causes. Only Marx and Engels had substituted materialism for God.

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[62] "Marx and I are ourselves partly to blame for the fact that younger writers sometimes lay more stress on the economic side than is due it. We had to emphasize this main principle in opposition to our adversaries, who denied it, and we had not always the time, the place or the opportunity to allow the elements involved in the interaction to come into their rights." Ibid.

[63] Ibid., p. 473.

[64] Ibid.

In a letter to Bloch of September 21, 1890, Engels came back to the subject once again. In it he asserted that he and Marx had never taught anything else than that, in the materialist conception of history, the ultimately determining factor was the production and reproduction of real life. If, he said, anyone twisted this into the statement that the economic element was the only determining one, he turned the whole theory into a meaningless phrase. In his own words,

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[65] It is from this point of view that Marx's criticism of Ranke takes on meaning. He referred to the latter as that "bouncing little root grubber Ranke . . . [who attributed] all great events to petty and mean causes . . . ." Ibid., p. 159.

> The economic situation is the basis, but the various elements of the superstructure—political forms of the class struggle and its consequences, constitutions established by the victorious class after a successful battle, etc.—forms of law—and then even the reflexes of all these actual struggles in the brains of the combatants: political, legal, philosophical theories, religious ideas and their further development into systems of dogma—also exercise their influence upon the course of historical struggles and in many cases *preponderate* [my italics] in determining their *form*. There is an interaction of all these elements, in which, amid all the endless *host* of accidents (i.e., of things and events whose inner connection is so remote or so impossible to prove that we regard it as absent and can neglect it), the economic movement finally asserts itself as necessary. Otherwise the application of the theory to any period of history one chose would be easier than the solution of a simple equation of the first degree.[66]

Engels also realized that, particularly in the realms of religion and philosophy, other factors than the economic one entered the picture. He realized that there was such a thing as a philosophical, an intellectual, and a religious tradition with which each generation began. Many of these traditions had their roots far back in history and had become independent forces as time went on because of the division of labor. To maintain that these traditions had their roots in economic causes would be pedantic, said Engels.[67] In philosophy and religion, changing economic conditions did not create anything new; but they did determine the way in which the existing traditions of thought were altered and developed. But the influence of the economic sphere in this alteration and development only came indirectly through changes in the political, legal, and moral concepts of a society.[68]

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[66] *Ibid*., p. 475.

It is clear from this discussion of Engels' latest views on material base and ideological superstructure, that the problem was in no way solved for him, even theoretically. It was indeed a thorny theoretical problem, but how much more thorny must it become when applied to a historical situation. Religion, and it is this aspect of the problem we are primarily concerned with here, would have to undergo an extensive investigation were one to attempt to determine the influence of production upon it; not only religion, but all of society would have to be investigated. One would have to begin with the study of the history of a religion at its beginning, trace the changes it had undergone from generation to generation, and determine to what extent these changes were due to tradition, influence of outside religious thought, and the like. Then one would have to attempt an assessment of the importance for these changes of those aspects of the ideological superstructure closest to the economic base such as the "political, legal and moral reflexes." Having established this, one would then have to trace the influences of the economic base on the ideological superstructure just above it and attempt to determine in what way the economic base had acted upon religion through it. It is even possible that if one did not proceed from the *a priori* idea that the economic influence was the 'ultimate' and 'final' motivating force of history, one might conceivably come to a conclusion which would deny this premise, for history is not bound by *a priori* ideas.

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[67] "As to the realms of ideology which soar still higher in the air, philosophy, etc., these have a prehistoric stock, found already in existence and taken over in the historic period, of what we should to-day call bunk. These various false conceptions of nature, of man's own being, of spirits, magic, forces, etc., have for the most part only a negative economic basis; but the low economic development of the prehistoric period is supplemented and also partially conditioned and even caused by the false conceptions of nature. And even though economic necessity was the main driving force of the progressive knowledge of nature and becomes ever more so, it would surely be pedantic to try and find economic causes for all this primitive nonsense . . . ." Engels to Conrad Schmidt, October 27, 1890, _ibid_., p. 482.

[68] _Ibid_., pp. 483-84.

To undertake such an analysis, however, would be far too tedious and become far too involved. What is more, it has as yet never been attempted by any Marxist historian. Hence, they have not yet proven their theory—or disproven it. It is much easier to assert the theory and then to read into the postulated connection whatever relationship one desires. That the 'Marxists' were already doing this during Engels' own time is clear from his complaints. Thus the Marxist, intent upon establishing his interpretation of history, is continually unmasking[69] and exposing the real meaning which he discovers behind a façade, because he has the answer to the epistemological problem. This is a particularly 'devastating' form of attack since no one is able to follow the reasoning of the Marxist historian here. One wonders at times whether the Marxist can follow his own reasoning, or lack of it.[70]

It was this aspect of the problem, the fact that the theory had never really been applied in all its ramifications to the study of history, that Engels came back to in his last letter on the subject. It is important enough to be quoted at some length here. In the letter Engels was referring to Franz Mehring's essay on historical materialism.

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[69] The German word, 'entlarven,' is much more meaningful and expresses what the Marxists do much better than the English equivalent.

[70] We shall have occasion to deal with this problem later on in the course of this study.

> Otherwise only one point is lacking, which however Marx and I *always* [my italics] failed to stress enough in our writings and in regard to which we are all equally guilty. That is to say, we all laid, and *were bound* to lay, the main emphasis, in the first place, on the *derivation* of political, juridical and other ideological notions, from basic economic facts. But in so doing we neglected the formal side—the ways and means by which these notions, etc., came about—for the sake of content. This has given our adversaries a welcome opportunity for misunderstandings and distortions, of which Paul Barth is a striking example. . .

It was true, Engels continued, that ideology was a process accomplished consciously by the thinker; but this consciousness was a false consciousness. The real motive forces compelling the thinker were unknown to him, because, Engels reasoned logically, otherwise it would not be an ideological process! The thinker imagined false or only seeming motive forces. He did not examine the thought product or investigate whether perchance it had been influenced by another source more remote and independent of thought. Since he believed that all action was mediated by thought, it appeared to him to be ultimately based upon thought.

Now there was some truth in this, and one could not simply reject it out of hand.

> The historical ideologist (historical is here simply meant to comprise the political, juridical, philosophical, theological—in short, all the spheres belonging to *society* and not only to nature) thus possesses in every sphere of science material which has formed itself independently out of the thought of

> previous generations and has gone through its own independent course of development in the brains of these successive generations. True, external facts belonging to one or another sphere may have exercised a co-determining [my italics] influence on this development, but the tacit presupposition is that these facts themselves are also only the fruits of a process of thought, and so we still remain within the realm of mere thought, which apparently has successfully digested even the hardest facts.

Engels, as we have seen, began the discussion of the relationship of material base and ideological superstructure with the confession that the theory itself had been found wanting. He ended the discussion with another confession: namely, that not even he and Marx had taken all the factors into consideration in the application of the theory to history:

> This aspect of the matter, which I can only indicate here, we have all, I think, neglected more than it deserves. It is the old story: form is always neglected at first for content. As I say, I have done that too much and the mistake has always struck me only later. So I am not only far from reproaching you with this in any way—as the older of the guilty parties I certainly have no right to do so; on the contrary. But I would like all the same to draw your attention to this point for the future.[71]

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[71] Engels to Mehring, July 14, 1893, Selected Correspondence, pp. 540-42.

D. History as History of Revolutionary Periods

We have seen that in the Marxist interpretation of history two dialectically opposing forces are at work propelling history forward. One force, be it economic or political, is constantly being superseded by another until all opposites will be merged in the final product of the classless society. But since the political power doomed to destruction does not want to relinquish its power, the emerging political force usually comes into armed conflict with it.[72] The final outcome, be it sooner or later, is always the victory of the emerging political power. We have seen further that exactly these periods of decisive struggle, these revolutionary periods, are the periods the Marxists study with predilection.

One has the uneasy feeling at times, however, that revolution is an end in itself, that it is the goal to be striven toward. Once revolution has been achieved all things will turn out right, from the dictatorship of the proletariat to the waning away of the state and the establishment of the true communist society on earth. The assumption is, of course, that revolution lies in the nature of things—is the violent outcome of the class struggle—and, if it brings about the rule of the proletariat and the classless society, it is the means to a good end. Good, therefore, will come from evil. But, if one can judge from the existing communist countries, the dictatorship of the proletariat has not led to the vanishing away of the state, quite on the contrary, it has led to the growth and expansion of the dictatorial powers of the state.

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[72] "In der Geschichte tritt die Bewegung in Gegensätzen erst recht hervor in allen kritischen Epochen der leitenden Völker. In solchen Momenten hat ein Volk nur die Wahl zwischen zwei Hörnern eines Dilemma: Entweder—Oder!" Engels in "Naturdialektik und Naturwissenschaft." Quoted in Ausgewählte Briefe, p. 44.

In "Grundsätze des Kommunismus," of 1847, Engels asked the rhetorical question whether the abolition of private property could be accomplished peacefully. One would hope so, he answered, for even the communist knew only too well that all conspiracies are dangerous. But the proletariat was being driven to this conspiracy by the exploiting capitalist class in that it was being suppressed more and more.[73] However, Marx and Engels were not in favor of revolution for its own sake. This is shown clearly by their attacks against the anarchists.[74] On the other hand, revolution within the framework of their historical dialectic was another matter.[75] Thus, in their

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[73] M/E, Werke, IV, 372.

[74] See, for example, "Rezension aus der 'Rheinischen Zeitung,'" ibid., p. 273.

[75] "To me this historical theory of Marx is the fundamental condition of all reasoned and consistent revolutionary tactics; to discover these tactics one has only to apply the theory of the economic and political conditions of the country in question." Engels to I. Zaslich, April 23, 1885, Selected Correspondence, p. 459.

"Statuten des Kommunistischen Bundes," they stated very clearly that the purpose of the communist party was to destroy the present bourgeois society by every means at its disposal in order to bring about the proletarian revolution.[76] Only after a classless society had come into existence would social evolution cease to be propelled forward by means of political revolutions. Until that time, however, one could expect nothing but struggle and death, bloody war or the void.[77] Only then could the state, which was the tool of the ruling class for the suppression of all other classes, be abolished.[78] It was precisely because the ruling class used the powers of the state for the suppression of all other classes that revolution became necessary.

With this interpretation of the forward progress of history it becomes obvious why the Marxists should divide history into epochs clearly set off from one another by revolutions. Thus the Reformation is seen as the beginning of the period of bourgeois revolutions which ended with the French Revolution.[79] At the same time the Marxist theory of revolution also leads to a glorification of revolution and those who have promoted revolution in the past, since revolutions are giant strides in the forward progress of history. Especially attractive to the Marxists are the revolutions attempted by the peasants and other 'underprivileged' classes. It is in these revolutionary groups that the Marxists have seen their 'forerunners.'[80] By demonstrating that the revolutions of the lower classes have increased in power and frequency, the Marxist finds proof that the proletarian revolution will one day have to be victorious.

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[76] M/E, Werke, VII, 566.

[77] Marx, "Das Elend der Philosophie," M/E, Werke, IV, 182.

[78] Marx/Engels, "Rezension aus der 'Rheinischen Zeitung,'" M/E, Werke, VII, 288.

[79] Gerhard Brendler, ed., Die Frühbürgerliche Revolution in Deutschland (Berlin, 1961).

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[80] Karl Kautsky, Vorläufer des neueren Sozialismus (Stuttgart, 1894).

CHAPTER II

MARXIST CRITICISM OF NON-MARXIST HISTORY

A. 'Parteilichkeit' against 'Objectivity'

At its best, non-Marxist historiography has aimed at objectivity in the presentation of historical evidence ever since Ranke uttered his now famous words about history as the narration of "wie es eigentlich gewesen." But honest historians have had to recognize time and time again that objectivity was an elusive coquette, enticing it is true, yet ever just beyond their reach. Like the young man enticed, however, historians have striven all the more diligently to lay hold of the coquette and embrace her with all the ardor of their love. In order to aid them in this pursuit, historians have turned to the study of the 'history of history' itself, believing, in the words of Herbert Butterfield, "to [be able to] bring our sins home to ourselves."[1]

Not so, however, the Marxist. In his moral integrity he has turned his back on the coquette, believing, in the words of Paul the Apostle, that 'it is better to marry than to burn.' And he has married—not the elusive, enticing coquette—but the darling proletariat, the class of the future. He has taken party for a cause, a cause that is scientifically certain of victory, and has thus exchanged an elusive but ever enticing objectivity for the prosaic but certain progress of a 'science.' Like the non-Marxist, he has also turned to the study of the 'history of history'; not, however, to bring his sins home to himself, but to bring the sins of the non-Marxist historian home to himself.[2]

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[1] Herbert Butterfield, Man on his Past (Boston, 1960), p. 30.

The tendency toward *Parteilichkeit* is not a recent manifestation of Marxist historiography; it has been present since Marx and Engels put Marxist pens to paper. In fact, it lies in the very nature of the Marxist philosophy of history. We have noted that the Marxists believe in a dialectical historical progress, that is, a progress which is propelled forward by opposing forces superseding one another until the final stage, the classless society, is reached. But this classless society can only come into existence with the victory of the proletariat; hence, in order to be progressive one must be on the side of the proletariat. It is for this reason that Marx and Engels could state in the Communist Manifesto that those who had discovered the theory of the dialectical historical progress would join the forces of the class of the future.

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[2] It is interesting to note that nearly every Marxist study of a particular aspect of history begins with a chapter on the historiography of that aspect. For example: M.M. Smirin, *Deutschland vor der Reformation* (Berlin, 1955), chapter I, pp. 15-16; Smirin, *Die Volksreformation des Thomas Müntzer und der grosse Bauernkrieg* (Berlin, 1952), *Vorwort*, pp. 4-40 (hereafter cited as *Volksreformation*); Max Steinmetz, "Probleme der frühbürgerlichen Revolution in Deutschland in der ersten Halfte des 16. Jahrhunderts," in Gerhard Brendler, ed., *Die frühbürgerliche Revolution in Deutschland* (Berlin, 1961), pp. 17-52; and Gerhard Zschäbitz, *Zur mitteldeutschen Wiedertäuferbewegung nach dem grossen Bauernkrieg* (Berlin, 1958), pp. 9-21.

Non-Marxist historians have, therefore, from their understanding of objectivity, with justice accused the Marxist historian of failing to be objective in his presentation of historical events. The Marxist has answered that there is no such thing as objectivity and that the non-Marxist historian has merely used the term in order to hide his reactionary subjective point of view behind it.[3] The only real difference between the two standpoints is that the point of view of the 'bourgeois' historian is unscientific and reactionary,[4] while that of the Marxist is scientific and progressive.

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[3] "Der erste [Begriff der Parteilichkeit] ist entstanden in Kampf gegen den bürgerlichen Scheinbegriff der 'Objektivität.' Dieser Begriff der Parteilichkeit beinhaltet, dass es überhaupt keine unparteiliche Ideologie geben kann, dass jede Ideologie Partei, Stellungnahme beinhaltet . . . Wir weisen darauf hin, dass faktisch kein Wissenschaftler auf eine Stellungnahme verzichten kann und verzichtet hat und verzichten darf. Wir erklären, dass Ranke so 'objektiv gewesen' ist, dass seine Werke von vielen und naiverweise einschliesslich seiner selbst als ideologische Stütze des 'protestantisch-preussischen Staates' betrachtet wurden." Kuczynski, "Parteilichkeit und Objektivität," in *Beiträge zum Geschichtsbild*, p. 9. M.S. Selektor, in "Das Prinzip der kommunistischen Parteilichkeit in der Ideologie," can even go so far as to say: "Die bürgerliche Unparteilichkeit auf dem Gebiet der Ideologie ist Schein und Fälschung. Die herrschende Ideologie in den kapitalistischen Ländern widerspiegelt und verteidigt die Interessen der Bourgeoisie und dient deren Klassenzielen. Der bürgerliche Objektivismus verhüllt den Ausbeutungscharakter der bürgerlichen Ideologie, um dieser das Eindringen der Werktätigen zu ermöglichen. Er ist eine Methode zu Maskierung der bürgerlichen Parteilichkeit auf dem Gebiet der Ideologie . . . ." *Sowjetwissenschaft Gesellschaftswissenschaftliche Beiträge*, 3 (1958), 275-76. (Hereafter this journal will be cited as *SGB*.)

[4] "Wir nennen Burkhardt einen Reaktionär, weil er den Fortschritt der Gesellschaft leugnete, weil er bestenfalls nur Kreisbewegungen: Aufstieg, Blüte und Niedergang mit erneutem Aufstieg auf anderer, aber nicht notwendigerweise höherer Stufe sieht." Kuczynski, "Parteilichkeit und Objektivität," pp. 14-15.

The Marxists do not postulate just any kind of haphazard progress, but a progress according to certain scientific laws, laws which can be, and have been, discovered in social development.[5] In 1885, Engels wrote to I. Zasulich: "To me the historical theory of Marx is the fundamental condition of all reasoned and consistent revolutionary tactics; to discover these tactics one has only to apply the theory to the economic and political conditions of the country in question."[6] In like manner, one had only to apply the theory—which has meanwhile become a law—to the economic and political conditions of a country in order to determine at which stage of development it was and then act accordingly. If, for example, a historian were to study the decline of the Middle Ages and the disintegration of the feudal system, the emerging bourgeoisie would be the progressive class and he would be acting in a reactionary manner were he to take sides against this emerging class. But there also came a time in the historical dialectic when the bourgeoisie had begun to decline, and from that point onwards it was the historian's duty to forsake the side of the bourgeoisie and go over to the side of the proletariat. The Parteilichkeit of the Marxist historian is, therefore, a Parteilichkeit for progress as understood only according to the Marxist historical dialectic.[7]

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[5] "Dieser Charakterzug ist, dass der Prozess der gesellschaftlichen Bewegungen ein Entwicklungsprozess ist, keine anarchische Bewegung oder Bewegung im Kreise, keine Wiederholung des Früheren, sondern eine fortschreitende Bewegung, eine Bewegung in aufsteigender Linie, vom Niederen zum Höheren. Dieser Prozess der gesellschaftlichen Bewegung geht gesetzmässig, elementar vor sich." Ibid., p. 10.

[6] Engels to Zasulich, April 23, 1885, Selected Correspondence, p. 459.

For the Marxist, progress is the very essence of reality. This has been established for them by the discovery of scientific principles and laws. Hence, reality itself is parteilich, in favor of the 'new' as opposed to the 'old,' in favor of the 'higher' as opposed to the 'lower.' Progress is therefore an objective and scientific reality. Proceeding from this vantage point, the Marxist can then conclude that he is the only 'realistically objective' historian, for he bases his interpretation of history on exactly this progress.[8]

On the other hand, the concept of Parteilichkeit leads to a certain kind of historical judgment which has no foundation in the empirical facts. From the Marxist theory of history it follows that during the period of transition from feudalism to capitalism the bourgeoisie is theoretically the revolutionary class. If, therefore, the bourgeoisie is in fact not revolutionary enough to suit the Marxist theory, it is condemned for not acting in 'its own interests.' Interestingly enough, this 'interest' is determined for the bourgeoisie in advance by the 'scientific' Marxist theory of history. The Marxist thus sets himself up as a judge on two fronts: first of all he determines how the bourgeoisie should act, then, if they do not in fact act this way, he condemns them.[9] The 'real,' economic reasons for the action of the bourgeoisie, however, the reasons the Marxist is ostensibly seeking because they are the 'final' motivating force in history, are glossed over in order to pay homage at the feet of a stringent dogmatism.

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[7] Kuczynski, "Parteilichkeit und Objektivität," p. 10. See also the Vorbemerkung to Gerhard Brendler, Das Täuferreich zu Müntzer 1534/35 (Berlin, 1966), p. 9.

[8] Ibid., pp. 10-11.

A further consequence of this Parteilichkeit is contained in the oft expressed demand that history be made pertinent to, or useful for, contemporary society, useful for the proletariat in its struggle against a reactionary capitalism.[10] To do this, history has to be written as the history of the working man, the proletariat and the peasant, and his revolutionary struggle for justice against an exploiting ruling class.[11] Thus the Peasant War in Germany of 1525 has become a favorite topic and Thomas Müntzer a favorite figure of Marxist historiography. Not only is the history of the working class emphasized, however, it is also made to fit into the Marxist pattern of history so that it becomes 'meaningful' for the contemporary struggle of the proletariat. The glorification of revolution in order to inspire revolution is another aspect of this making history 'meaningful.' Thus Marx could write to Engels concerning a second edition of the latter's Bauernkrieg that "The whole thing in Germany wird abhängen von der möglichkeit, to back the Proletarian revolution by some second edition of the Peasants' War. Dann wird die Sache vorzüglich."[12]

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[9] A somewhat similar argument we shall meet in the course of this study is encountered with regard to the peasants and Müntzer and their failure to gain a victory in the Peasant War. This failure is blamed by Marx and Engels on the fact that the historical dialectic had not as yet progressed far enough to make a proletarian revolution successful! See my "Thomas Müntzer in Marxist Thought," CH, XXXIV (September, 1965), 310.

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[10] "Der marxistische Geschichtswissenschaftler erklärt nicht nur das vergangene historische Geschehen in der Welt, sondern er setzt sein Wissen und seine Persönlichkeit ein, um dem wirklichen und wahren Fortschritt zu dienen. Wirklich und wahr aber ist in unserer Zeit nur der Fortschritt, den in der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik die Arbeitsklasse mit ihren Verbündeten beim Aufbau des Sozialismus verwirklicht." Zschäbitz und Brendler, "Geschichtswissenschaft und sozialistische Erziehung," in Leipziger Volkszeitung, October 22, 1966, 5:1.

[11] "Marx und Engels waren also der Ansicht, dass die richtige Darstellung der politischen Geschichte Deutschlands eine wichtige Waffe der deutschen Arbeitsklasse im Kampf um den demokratischen Entwicklungsweg des deutschen Volkes ist." Smirin, Deutschland vor der Reformation, p. 15.

The demand to make history 'meaningful' for the present stands in connection with another aspect of Marxist historiography, namely, the belief that the historian can predict the broad outlines of the future. This makes him an invaluable asset to the politician who, in order to be an outstanding politician, must also be an historian of merit.[13] Politics and history join hands, for history is the science whereby the politican determines which path to follow to the future. Were it not for the Marxist theory of the revolution in material base and ideological superstructure with the coming of the communistic classless society, one would almost be inclined to say that the Marxists had forsaken their own material base in this instance. However, with the coming of the communistic society, man is supposed to be able to free himself from his material surroundings and begin to shape his own history.

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[12] Marx to Engels, April 16, 1856, M/E, Werke, XXIX, 47. The German and English mixture is in the original.

[13] "Nicht zufällig ist deshalb der erfolgreichste deutsche Politiker der Gegenwart, Walter Ulbricht, zugleich ein hervorragender Historiker." Zschäbitz und Brendler, "Geschichtswissenschaft und sozialistische Erziehung," 5:1. This statement must be compared with the book by Hermann Weber, Ulbricht fälscht Geschichte (Köln, 1964). If what Weber records is true, how shall one understand the phrase, "hervorragender Historiker?"

From this discussion of Parteilichkeit it becomes ever clearer that the Marxists are not writing history in order to find out what really happened in the past, despite the fact that they lay claim to having discovered the scientific answer to the understanding of history. History is parteilich and must be made to serve the working class. It does this through the glorification of revolution and revolutionaries, by proving that history progresses according to the Marxist dialectic, by showing that the proletariat must come to power sooner or later, and so forth. "Wie es eigentlich gewesen" is really, in the final analysis, unimportant to them and hence they discard the enticing 'bourgeois' coquette, objectivity, in favor of a science which predicts the future.

B. Facts without a Philosophy

A second basic criticism of non-Marxist historiography is implicit in Engels' criticism of Zimmermann's history of the Peasant War.[14] He stated that, although Zimmermann's study was defective here and there, it was still the best compilation of the factual evidence available. However, it lacked inner coherence. Zimmermann had failed to see the inner relationship between the religious and political struggles of the time with the economic conditions; he had failed to discern correctly the social conditions which had determined both the outbreak and the outcome of the war.[15] This accusation, that Zimmermann's study lacked an inner coherence, is very much akin to Marx's criticism of Ranke. According to Marx, the former attributed "all great events to petty and mean causes."[16] Both criticisms touched essentially the same problem: isolated facts could not cause great events, only when seen in conjunction with a total picture, a Weltanschauung, could they gain meaning and explain great events.

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[14] Wilhelm Zimmermann, Geschichte des grossen deutschen Bauernkrieges, 3 vols. (Stuttgart, 1841-43).

Marx did not object that Ranke had his facts wrong, that they were incomplete, or even that he drew wrong inferences. He objected that the latter should attribute great events to these mean and petty causes—these isolated facts. Engels, approaching the problem from his theory of history, stated that Zimmermann's work lacked coherence because he had not been able to fit these facts into their proper context—the proper theory. A frame of reference was needed to give 'meaning,' to give coherence to the facts. It becomes clear that Marx and Engels were not content to remain with the secondary causes, the facts. They wanted to get at the essence of history; they wanted to find the 'first cause' which would allow them to see all other 'causes' in a certain relationship to this one. They wanted ultimate truth in history. They needed to see great historical events against the background of great historical causes. When they applied their theory of history to the facts they arrived at these great causes: the historical dialectic, the material base and the class war. These, they believed, lay in the very fabric of history.

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[15] Engels, Vorbemerkung to his "Bauernkrieg," M/E, Werke, VII, 531.

[16] Marx to Engels, November 4, 1864, Selected Correspondence, p. 159.

This theme has been sounded in various forms by different Marxists from time to time since. Non-Marxists, it has been said, may well be able to establish new facts, but very little else. Of late, however, this tendency has lessened and one Marxist has dared to contradict his fellows and maintain that the accomplishments of non-Marxist historians are by no means limited to being able to ascertain certain facts and determine certain dates.[17] However, the undertone of criticism has remained very much the same. The non-Marxist historian is accused of having failed to take into consideration this, that, or the other Marxist theoretical principle which would have given 'meaning' to the facts he had collected.[18] Or, the non-Marxist historian has failed to 'generalize' correctly, if at all, from the facts he has collected.[19]

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[17] Joachim Streisand, "Progressive Traditionen und reaktionäre Anachronismen in der deutschen Geschichtswissenschaft," Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft, IX (1961), 1776. (Hereafter this journal is cited as ZfG.)

This criticism shows once again the Marxists' basic disregard for inductive reasoning from the factual evidence. Although they demand that the historian generalize from the facts, the problem is that one is allowed to generalize only within a given philosophic frame of reference.[20] Any attempt to modify this frame of reference resulting from the inductive reasoning from the facts is labelled as revisionistic. That the Marxists are having their difficulties in harmonizing the facts with their philosophy, however, has already been pointed out. Various demands have been forthcoming of late that the philosophic ballast be taken from the back of the Einzelwissenschaften, of which family history is not an unimportant member.

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[18] "Leider beschäftigt sich F. nicht mit der Ausbeutungsrate. Er sieht Klassenharmonie, wo ökonomische Ausbeutung and soziale Unterdrückung regierten . . . ." Ernst Werner, review of Enrico Fiumi, Storia economica e sociale di San Gimignano (Florence, 1961), in ZfG, X (1962), 1722.

[19] "Im Unterschied zu E. Fiumi betrachtet B. die spannungsgeladene Atmosphäre zwischen 1343 und 1378 als Zeit verschärfter Klassenkämpfe, die ihre Ursache in der ökonomischen Situation hatten (S. 388,392). Trotz dieser richtigen Ausgangsposition ist man etwas enttäuscht, wenn man die ersten zwei Kap. gelesen hat. Der Vf. kommt darin über Beschreibungen nicht hinaus." Ernst Werner, review of G. Brucker, Florentine Politics and Society 1343-1378 (Princeton, 1962), in ZfG, XI (1963), 1000.

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[20] "Die aufgabe der marxistischen Geschichtswissenschaft besteht somit darin, auf Grund der objektiven Gesetzmässigkeit der Geschichte die ganze Vielfältigkeit und Konkretheit jedes einzelnen historischen Problems aufzuzeigen. Geschieht das nicht, so läuft der marxistische Historiker Gefahr, zwischen der historischkonkreten Untersuchung und der theoretischen Analyse und Verallgemeinerung und Erklärung der Tatsachen und Erscheinungen, wodurch nicht nur das Geschichtsbild verarmt und eingeengt, sondern die objektive Wahrheit selbst verkümmert und verfälscht wird. Die bedingungslose Wahrheitsliebe und Objektivität der marxistischen Geschichtsforschung hat mit dem trivialen bürgerlichen Objektivismus, der mit seiner vorgeblichen 'Unparteilichkeit,' 'Wertfreiheit,' 'Leidenschaftslosigkeit' in Wirklichkeit die kapitalischen Klasseninteressen verhüllt, nichts gemein. Die entscheidende Voraussetzung für die Vermeidung dieser Gefahr ist sowohl das gründliche Studium der Erkenntnisse des historischen Materialismus als auch des historischkonkreten Tatsachenmaterials, das sich jedoch vom Tatsachenmaterial der anderen Wissenschaften unterscheidet, dass es nicht—von der Gegenwartsgeschichte abgesehen—unmittelbar beobachtet und experimental wiederhergestellt werden kann, sondern sich auf die Vergangenheit bezieht, so dass die objektive geschichtliche Wahrheit nur auf Grund von Quellen herausgearbeitet werden kann. Die objektive geschichtliche Wahrheit ist für den marxistischen Historiker somit das Resultat indirekter Erfahrungen auf Grund der Kenntnisse der objektiven Gesetzmässigkeiten der Geschichte, die ihm der dialektische und historische Materialismus als Methode, als Anleitung beim Studium der Geschichte vermittelt." Leo Stern, Karl Marx (Berlin, 1954), pp. 41-42.

The Marxists are quite aware that conflicts can and do arise between the empirical facts and the Marxist philosophy. We have noted in the previous chapter how Engels already complained about those 'Marxists' who thought they had only to apply the theory to historical situations without studying the facts. He himself was of the opinion that the facts would harmonize with the philosophy. However, as time went on he emphasized the study of the sources more and more. To Laura Lafargue, Marx's daughter, he confessed in 1891:

> I had to read the whole literature on the subject (which entre nous, I had not done when I wrote the book—with a cheek worthy of my younger days), and to my great astonishment [!] I find that I had guessed the contents of all these unread books pretty correctly—a good deal better luck than I had deserved . . . .[21]

Some three years earlier he had written Kautzky concerning the latter's articles on the "Bergarbeiter und der Bauernkrieg, vornehmlich in Thüringen," in Die Neue Zeit, 1889, that they were

> . . . the best that you have yet done, really thorough research on the deciding aspects, and this by means of a simple investigation of the

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[21] Friedrich Engels, Paul et Laura Lafargue, Correspondance, vol. III (Paris, 1959), 63.

> factual evidence, not as in the Bevölkerungsgeschichte and the Urfamiliengeschichte which were written in order to confirm a predetermined opinion. As a result something of merit is achieved.[22]

Yet in his youth Engels had taken Zimmermann's Bauernkrieg and simply reinterpreted it.

As long as the Marxists were dealing with history in general terms they did not encounter too much of a problem in harmonizing the theory with the factual evidence, especially if they could proceed from 'bourgeois' interpretation which they labelled 'reactionary.' The time is upon them, however, when they have begun to tackle the sources in earnest in order not to be ridiculed by the West. As a result, tension has begun to build between the results arrived at through the inductive reasoning from the factual evidence and the attempts to generalize from that evidence within the given confines of Marxist theory. Lieber has compiled a mass of evidence demonstrating exactly this point. He has shown that some Marxist scholars have recently begun to demand that their colleagues give up once and for all time the "false reliance upon the 'Great.'" Of these 'Great,' Engels is singled out for particular mention and his works condemned as long since superseded.[23] Other internal critics have demanded that the Marxist scholar give up thinking in stereotyped patterns and put an end to his superficial criticism of non-Marxist scholarship.[24] One scholar has freely admitted that "during the time of the personality cult an 'arbitrary use of the facts' was the order of the day."[25] Another has demanded that historians return to the search for 'historical truth' by ceasing to impose an interpretation upon the facts.[26]

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[22] Engels to Kautsky, September 15, 1889, Benedict Kautsky, ed., Friedrich Engels' Briefwechsel mit Karl Kautsky (Vienna, 1955), p. 247. (Hereafter cited as E/K, Briefwechsel.)

[23] Lieber, Philosophie und Geschichte, p. 26.

These are signs that all is not well in the marriage of the Marxist historian with his proletarian philosophy. Uneasy voices are beginning to call for a separation if not an outright divorce while others are secretly yearning for bygone times when, in their youthful impetuosity, they pursued the elusive coquette, objectivity, in the 'bourgeois' manner. Many would now vow to be more constant in their pursuit were they but given another opportunity.

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[24] *Ibid.*, p. 29.

[25] *Ibid.*

[26] *Ibid.*, p. 31.

C. Argumentum ad Hominem

A third Marxist criticism takes the form of the argumentum ad hominem. As a form of logical argumentation it has little value; however, as a means of discrediting or putting in doubt the veracity of an opponent it can sometimes be most effective, especially with those who are of one mind with the user. It is a form of argumentation not seldom met in theological debate of times past. Yet it is usually only then applied when the arguer has no other rational arguments left in his quiver and is, therefore, usually a sign of rational bankruptcy. By discrediting our opponent we hope to discredit his argument, but the one has seldom, if ever, anything to do with the other. It is a mode of argumentation which condemns the person using it more than the person against whom it is used.

In Marxist logic the ad hominem argument takes on a very specific form, for it lies in the very nature of Parteilichkeit. According to the Marxist, the very essence of reality is progress, progress toward the classless society, and the Marxist has taken party for this progress. Since the proletariat is to usher in the classless society, it thus becomes the power behind this progress. Hence, the Marxist has taken sides with the proletariat. We have seen how the Marxist reasoning concerning Parteilichkeit led to the distinction between the reactionary and the progressive elements in history. Consequently, any historian who is not for the Marxist and the proletariat is reactionary, for he cannot be in favor of progress. To the term reactionary, the Marxist also adds the more derogative term, revisionism. Whereas the reactionary historian is accused of being behind the times and of advocating the ideals of a reactionary class, the revisionist is accused of falsifying the orthodox teaching. To discredit a person within the Marxist ranks, it is often enough just to label him a revisionist.[27]

Both the reactionary and the revisionistic historian 'falsifies' history because, in the first case, the historian is writing from the perspective of a superseded ideology. The second type of historian, of course, is by far the more dangerous for he diverts the people from the true goals of history and leads them into delaying and even destructive byways.[28]

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[27] Wolfgang Leonhard has pointed out that during World War II the Russians, in their Comintern schools, were very liberal about allowing their students to read Nazi and Western democratic literature but were very careful about revisionistic literature because the latter began with the same Marxist presuppositions but arrived at different conclusions than Stalinism. Die Revolution entlässt ihre Kinder (Köln, 1955), p. 202.

[28] ". . . Wo sind alle die Ideologen der II Internationale geblieben, die Macdonald und Henderson, die Kautsky und Hilferding, die Vandervelde und Hendrik de Man, die Otto Bauer, Karl Renner, Max Adler u.a., die diese in der bürgerlichen Sozialwissenschaft verbreiteten antimarxistischen Theorien in das Lager der Arbeiterklasse trugen, um diese auf raffinierte Art mit pseudomarxistischer Phrasologie zu verwirren und zu desorientieren." Leo Stern, "Zur geistigen Situation der bürgerlichen Geschichtswissenschaft der Gegenwart," ZfG, I (1953), 847.

The argumentum ad hominem was particularly beloved as a weapon by Marxist historians of the Stalin era but has been a significant characteristic of all Marxist historiography. It divides all men into two categories; the good and the progressive on the one hand, and the bad and reactionary on the other. Marxist historiography, therefore, is full of adjectives which in themselves already contain a moral judgment. Smirin's volumes on Thomas Müntzer and the Reformation are an excellent case in point. He is continually speaking of non-Marxist historians in the following manner: "Another reactionary historian of the imperialistic German bourgeoisie . . . ."[29] Or: "Below wrote his book, 'Die Ursachen der Reformation,' during World War I. It appeared as the tool of an unrestrained propaganda of German Imperialism . . . ."[30] And again: "The works of Hartung and Below arose under the aegis of a chauvinistic Germany. Both historians take as their point of departure the reactionary thesis of Ranke . . . ."[31] In his Die Volksreformation des Thomas Münzers und der grosse Bauernkrieg, Smirin discarded the still fundamental study of the Peasant War by Günther Franz with these choice words:

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[29] Smirin, Deutschland vor der Reformation, p. 33.

[30] Ibid., p. 35.

[31] Ibid.

> In the year 1933, immediately after the accession to power of the Nazis in Germany, a Privatdozent of the University of Marburg, Günther Franz, published a comprehensive volume which in his own words, presented a completely new interpretation of the Peasant War which served as the historical foundation for Hitler's regime.[32]

Perhaps the most fitting comment to the above passages would be to state that, had Smirin written his books between 1939 and 1941, he might even have found occasion to praise Franz's study.

Neither in the historiographical chapter of his book on Thomas Müntzer nor in that of his book on Germany before the Reformation did Smirin deem it at all necessary to refute the arguments of the non-Marxist historians in any rational manner. It was enough to label them as imperialistic, reactionary, chauvinistic, faschistic and the like, to have done with their logic and their reasoning.

By using the ad hominem argument against non-Marxist historians, the Marxists avoid an Auseinandersetzung on the basis of the empirical, factual evidence. The same approach is also extended to historical interpretations. We have seen how the Marxists, arguing from their own position of Parteilichkeit, came to the conclusion that objectivity was beyond the reach of man. By reasoning deductively, it followed that everyone was advocating some position or defending some reactionary bastion. The Marxists are therefore of the opinion that since they must make history meaningful for the proletariat, every other class must do the same. Hence it is not of the first importance that one argue from the facts or try to point out the flaws in the other person's argumentation from these facts. The first objective of the Marxist historian is to destroy, or at least to discredit, the ideology which lurks behind the feigned objectivity of the non-Marxist historian. Thus he seldom, if ever, enters into a fruitful dialogue with historians of other 'faiths.' He does not even attempt to destroy the non-Marxist's interpretation by reasoning from his 'ultimately motivating' material base for he is too involved in attacking the supposed ideological superstructure. Like Don Quixote, he is continually tilting at windmills, with the difference that the Marxist's windmills are largely figments of his imagination which he has created because of his own prejudiced position.

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[32] Smirin, Volksreformation, p. 36.

Max Steinmetz, in his chapter on the non-Marxist historiography of the Reformation, uses this latter form of argumentation almost exclusively. But, as with the ad hominem argument, no rational purpose is served. It is enough, he states, to expose the main tendency of Reformation studies in post-war West Germany in order to discredit it. This tendency, he goes on, is none other than the church-history-theological one; the Reformation is being studied more and more from this vantage point, he complains. The secular approach to history, the approach which had become the basis of most historical interpretations since the time of Renaissance Humanism and the Enlightenment, is being discarded. Thus the period of German history in which the frühbürgerliche Revolution took place is being falsified to portray a one-sided or even an exclusively church-theological problem.[33]

Of course, Steinmetz continues, this interpretation is not a new one; what is new, however, is the consensus of opinion this interpretation is now receiving. Even historians of secular history are in agreement with this interpretation. Seen from the vantage point of historiography, this consensus with regard to a reactionary interpretation of the Reformation is nothing less than a relapse into the errors of an antiquated past.[34] Thus Steinmetz seems to be of the opinion that there is no need to demonstrate from the history of the period that this interpretation is a misguided one. He needs only to label it as outdated, and—as a result—reactionary, to have done with it.

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[33] Steinmetz, "Probleme der frühbürgerliche Revolution," in G. Brendler, Frühbürgerliche Revolution, p. 32.

[34] Ibid.

It is interesting to note in this connection that the growing ecumenicity of Church historians in West Germany is somewhat disturbing to Steinmetz. He realizes clearly enough that the Catholic and Protestant Church historians heretofore interpreted the history of Christianity largely from their own dogmatic point of view. He does not, however, care to admit that the interest in ecumenicity may have lifted some of the dogmatic blinkers from the eyes of denominationally pursuaded Church historians, for it might well be that Church historians at long last are at least beginning to try to understand the other churches and not merely condemning them in order to ground all the more securely their own position. Were Steinmetz to admit such a possibility, he would have to come to the conclusion that even the theologians were beginning to flirt with the coquette, objectivity. But to admit such a possibility would have implications for his own Parteilichkeit which, at the moment, he has no intention of tolerating. Thus he sees in this unholy union of Catholic and Protestant a conspiracy against the Socialistic world.[35]

D. Society and the Individual

A fourth criticism of non-Marxist historiography by the Marxist is the criticism that the former overemphasizes the role of the individual in history to the neglect of the role of society, of the masses, in that history. As Steinmetz expressed it: "The over-evaluation of the role of the individual or the cult of the so-called elite is usually connected with the under-evaluation or even defamation of the role of the masses in history."[36] If the non-Marxist overemphasizes the role of the individual in society, what then, according to the Marxist, is the real role of an outstanding personality in history?

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[35] "Bemerkenswert ist in diesem Zusammenhang ein Vorgang, der eigentlich bereits nach der Grossen Sozialistischen Oktoberrevolution einsetzte, aber erst nach 1945 seine volle Bedeutung erhielt: Ich meine die Eliminierung der alten konfessionellen Gegensätze, die sich ja immer wieder gerade bei der Behandlung und Darstellung der Reformationszeit neu entzündet hatten, in der heutigen westdeutschen Reformationshistoriographie. J. Lortz ist dafür im katholischen Lager kennzeichnend mit seinem Höchstmass von Annäherung an das protestantische Bild von Luther und der Reformation. E.W. Zeeden, der verstorbene Karl-August Meissinger und auch G. Ritter vertreten die gleiche Tendenz auf protestantischer Seite, was Zeeden sogar dazu geführt hat, zur katholischen Kirche überzutreten. Diese heilige-unheilige Allianz spielt heute eine nicht unwesentliche Rolle in der Politik des imperialistischen Lagers gegen den Sozialismus und seine Weltanschauung. Sie wirkt in den verschiedenen Formen; aber immer richtet sie sich gegen den Marxismus-Leninismus, die Weltanschauung, die die Arbeiterklasse zum Siege führt. Man erzielt diese Einigung durch gegenseitige unwesentliche Zugeständnisse unter Beibehaltung, ja geradezu unter Einigung auf das alte kirchengeschichtlich—theologisch bestimmt Bild." Ibid., pp. 34-35.

No one would deny that there are forces at work in history which at least modify, if they do not determine, the actions of men in society. Renaissance man saw himself buffeted by the winds of fortuna whereas Calvin saw man's actions as predetermined by a providential God. As we have seen, Marx and Engels laid emphasis upon the material forces as the ultimately determining facts in history. We have also seen, however, that they in no way denied the reaction of ideas or ideologies on the material base. Exactly what place did the individual have in this system? In how far were his actions determined and in how far could he exercise free will?

Before the Marxists even begin to discuss the problem, one point has already been established for them, namely, that the material conditions are the ultimately determining factor of all history. In the final analysis, therefore, man's actions are determined. Anyone who would dare to suggest that man could conquer these material conditions, or had in fact conquered them in a given historical situation, would be giving a false picture of history because this is theoretically impossible. But outstanding personalities are not in all instances molded by their environment and sometimes even mold their environment to suit themselves,[37] and if the non-Marxist comes to the above conclusion he is, according to the Marxist, falsifying history. Once again, however, the Marxist does not exercise criticism by arguing inductively from the historical situation, but argues deductively from a preconceived philosophical position.

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[36] Ibid., p. 33.

Proceeding from the statement in the "Deutsche Ideologie" that man makes his own history, Engels wrote to Bloch in 1890:

> We make our own history, but in the first place under very definite presuppositions and conditions. Among these the economic ones are finally decisive. But the political etc., ones, and indeed even the traditions which haunt human minds, also play a part although not the decisive one . . . .
>
> In the second place, however, history makes itself in such a way that the final result always arises from the conflicts between many individual wills, of which each again has been made what it is by a host of particular conditions of life. Thus there are innumerable intersecting forces, an infinite series of parallelograms of forces which give rise to one resultant—the historical event.

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[37] One needs only to mention Stalin in this connection.

> This again may itself be viewed as the product of a power which, taken as a whole, works unconsciously and without volition. For what each individual wills is obstructed by everyone else, and what emerges is something that no one willed. Thus past history proceeds in the manner of a natural process and is also essentially subject to the same laws of movement. But from the fact that individual wills—of which each desires what he is impelled to by his physical constitution and external, in the last resort economic, circumstances (either his own personal circumstances or those of society in general)—do not attain what they want, but are merged into a collective mean, a common resultant, it must not be concluded that their value = 0. On the contrary, each contributes to the resultant and is to this degree involved in it.[38]

Much could be said regarding the above passage, but only one thing needs to be said, and that is that Engels leaves completely out of consideration those social institutions which society has created in order to make, and to facilitate, decision making and to implement these decisions. It is only too obvious that the decisions made by a president of the United States and executed by the machinery of government he has at his command has much more force than the decision made by John Smith, proletarian from Gopher Gulch. It is further obvious that the decisions reached by the dictator Stalin in Russia had a more binding character than those even of the

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[38] Engels to Bloch, September 21, 1890, Selected Correspondence, pp. 475-76.

United States president.[39] Once a dictator has captured the machinery of state and has control of the military power, his decision and his will becomes all-powerful.

These decision-making bodies are not only to be found in government; they permeate the whole of the social structure. It is not simply that individual wills clash and are merged into a collective mean through which the economic factor ultimately asserts itself. Marx and Engels in their practical activity themselves gave the lie to what Engels said here, for they were constantly railing against despotic governments and threatening them with the proletarian revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Engels came back to the same problem again in a letter to Starkenburg of 1894. Men, he said, made their own history, but not as yet with a collective will or according to a collective plan or even in a definitely defined, given society. As a result, their efforts clashed, and for that very reason all such societies were governed by necessity, which was supplemented by and appeared under the form of accident. The necessity which here asserted itself amidst all accident was again ultimately economic necessity. Then he came to the problem of great men:

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[39] "In his essay 'Dialectical and Historical Materialism' Stalin wrote in 1938: 'As regards the significance of social ideas, theories, views, and political institutions . . . historical materialism, far from denying them, stresses the role and importance of these factors in the life of society . . . . Once they have arisen they become the most potent force . . . which facilitates the progress of society.' While conceding the influence of material conditions in the origin of such ideas and institutions, Stalin refused to recognize them as serious obstacles to the political program which he represented . . . . All the material conditions of existence, so central in Marx's philosophy of history, are here dismissed by Stalin—they will neither guarantee nor prevent what he wants to have done." Robert Vincent Daniels, "Fate and Will in the Marxian Philosophy of History," Journal of History of Ideas, XXI (October—December, 1960), 538. (Hereafter this journal will be cited as JHI.)

> . . . This is where the so-called great men come in for treatment. That such and such a man and precisely that man arises at that particular time in that given country is of course pure accident. But cut him out and there will be a demand for a substitute and this substitute will be found, good or bad, but in the long run he will be found.

He went on to argue: that Napoleon should have become the military dictator whom the French Republic, exhausted by its own war, had rendered necessary, was an accident. But, had there been no Napoleon, another would have been found to fill his place. That this was so was proven, Engels continued profoundly, by the fact that the man had always been found as soon as he became necessary![40] Engels was simply arguing that, because history had taken a particular path, it had to take that path. This is a spurious way of arguing to say the least, because it keeps us from discovering the real causes why history in fact did take the path it did. To say that something had to happen in a certain way because it indeed happened that way may be a profound statement, but it explains nothing. It is easy to be wise after the fact, more difficult, however, to determine the causes from the course history has taken.

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[40] Engels to Starkenburg, January 25, 1894, ibid., p. 518.

No matter how we have approached the Marxist theory of history, be it from the theory itself or from the Marxist criticism of non-Marxist historiography, the unavoidable conclusion is that in all decisive points this theory has set limitations to the conclusions that can be reached by an inductive study of history. As a theory it undoubtedly contains some truth; however, theories must never determine how we interpret history. But the Marxist theory not only determines how her practitioners interpret history, it also determines what facts or what aspects they look for in history; it is a selective history because the Marxist maintains that the economic factor is the ultimately determining one. Instead of beginning from the opposite side and trying to determine from a specific study of a specific time and area what exactly the determining forces are, they proceed from a position reached deductively. This makes them logicians after a fashion but not historians.

CHAPTER III

MARXISM AND CHRISTIANITY

A. Christian and Marxist History

In Chapter I we noted that Marx and Engels developed a number of sociological categories which they later used in the interpretation of history. We noted further that these categories were determined to a large extent, if not exclusively, by particular philosophical presuppositions and the nature of 19th-century capitalistic society. There had been a time, however, when students of history had approached their discipline with a different philosophic—or religious—perspective and had been faced by a different social structure. The Reformation was such a time. Its view of history was still a Christian view although isolated attempts had been made, particularly in Renaissance Italy, to write political history from a purely secular point of view.

In contrast to the cyclical theories of history that were expounded in Antiquity, Christianity for the first time viewed history as the progressive revelation of God and, hence, moving toward a definite goal. God had already revealed Himself through His intervening acts in history to the Jewish people, acts which had been recorded in the Old Testament. There were certain historical milestones which, when one looked back, seemed to point to the culminating historical act of God in Christ Jesus and His sacrificial death upon the cross. But as far as the Christian was concerned, the incarnation of the Logos by no means signified the end of this linear progress of history, for Christ had stated, and His disciples had reiterated, that He would come again to establish His Kingdom of Righteousness on earth. This was the Christian hope and this the goal of all Christian history.

This concept of history was based upon the Bible and the chronology contained in it. Despite the beginnings of 'profane' history in Italy during the Renaissance,[1] the chronicles which treated of universal history still placed all historical events into a chronological scheme which was derived from the Bible.[2] This chronological scheme remained intact for some time after the

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[1] Adalbert Klempt, Die Säkularisierung der Universalhistorischen Auffassung (Göttingen, 1960), p. 124. According to Klempt, these beginnings were destroyed by a resurgent Catholic Counterreformation.

[2] Thus Sebastian Franck in his Chronica, Zeitbuch unnd Geschichtsbibell von anbegyn bis in diss gegenwertig 1536. iar verlengt (Strassburg, 1536). See also Gerald Strauss, Historian in an Age of Crisis. The Life and Work of Johannes Aventinus (Cambridge, Mass., 1963).

Reformation despite the fact that a gradually increasing criticism was exercised on the theological interpretation of history.[3] It was only when the biblical chronology itself came into doubt in the 17th century that the historical perspective based upon this chronology began to lose its orientation. The coup de grâce to this biblical interpretation of history, whose grand outlines had also remained the outlines of 'profane' history until this time, was delivered by Richard Simon's biblical criticism and his destruction of the validity of the biblical chronology.[4]

With the destruction of the general outlines of universal history accepted thus far, another frame of reference had to be found. Little by little, from Leibnitz to Marx, progress was made toward this new frame of reference, which, in many ways, was a process by which the biblical eschatological hope was secularized.[5] With the Enlightenment philosophers this new frame of reference took on the form of a theory of progress.[6] But in many respects these philosophers were not content merely to formulate a vague theory of progress; they felt compelled to give the future a very definite shape and form.[7]

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[3] Klempt, Säkularisierung, p. 125.

[4] Ibid., pp. 126-27.

[5] Ibid., pp. 128-32. See also especially Carl L. Becker, The Heavenly City of the 18th Century Philosophers (New Haven, 1932); and Karl Löwith, Weltgeschichte und Heilsgeschehen (Stuttgart, 1953).

The person to give this future the most definite shape and form, a future determined by the inevitable progress of the historical dialectic, was Marx himself. In his famous letter, the Critique of the Gotha Programme (1875), Marx sketched the outlines of this future society.

> . . . After the enslaving subordination of individuals to the division of labor has disappeared, and with it the contradiction between intellectual and physical work; after labor has become not only a means for life, but itself the prime necessity of living; after the forces of production have grown, along with the many sided development of the individual, and all the well-springs of communal

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[6] Frank E. Manuel, The Prophets of Paris (Cambridge, Mass., 1962), p. 13, according to whom Turgot was the first to formulate the theory in its essential form.

[7] "Unlike their German counterparts, none of the prophets of Paris were closeted academic philosophers, and for them action was always bound up with theory. They were all committed men; they knew what they wanted the future world to be like, often down to the minutest social arrangement. They were the dawn, not the twilight. Philosophical history was for them a prerequisite for sound prophecy, and prophecy was necessary for right conduct. In this respect the Marx of the thesis on Feuerbach—'philosophers have hitherto merely interpreted the world variously, the issue is to change it'—derived from them rather than from Hegel." Ibid., p. 299.

> riches flow more plentifully—only then can the narrow, bourgeois horizon of rights be completely transcended, and society inscribe on its banners: from each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs.[8]

Thus the journey from the Kingdom of God, to be inaugurated by the second coming of Christ, to the secular, worldly paradise, to be inaugurated by the proletarian revolution, was completed. Whereas the first goal of history was awaited in hope because the historical Christ had promised it to those who believed, the earthly paradise was the inevitable goal of the laws of the historical dialectic.

Needless to say, the progression from a religious or theological frame of reference from which to interpret history to a radically secular frame of reference which was not only hostile to Christianity, but which denied it any essential reality, had to have tremendous implications for the interpretation of history. Precisely this secular Weltanschauung has been canonized in the Marxist theory of history.

In many ways, however, the Marxist theory of history is similar to that of Christianity. Both view history as a cosmic struggle between good and evil forces: the Christian sees these forces as embodied ultimately in God and the devil, whereas the Marxist sees the struggle as taking place on earth between the various classes of ruler and ruled, oppressor and oppressed. In neither case, however, will this be an endless struggle, for the forces of good will ultimately be victorious. This gives history a goal in both instances; a goal to be awaited in hope for the Christian because it is a trancendental goal,[9] whereas for the Marxist it is an earthly goal which man himself, once he has discovered the laws at work in the historical dialectic, can aid in bringing about.

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[8] As quoted in ibid., p. 314. Manuel goes on to say: "Of course, Marx's historical analysis of 'needs,' intimately related to the Hegelian problem of alienation, is an extraordinarily complex conceptualization, in many ways far more subtle philosophically than anything the Frenchmen propounded. None the less, all of them were aiming their arrows in the same direction . . . ."

These similarities did not go unnoticed by the Marxists. Engels in particular turned his attention to the similarities between the history of early Christianity and that of emerging socialism in his own day.[10] In his "On the History of early Christianity," he began with the following words:

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[9] Not always has the 'Kingdom of God' remained a transcendental goal in the history of the Christian Church.

[10] Before even Engels turned his attention to the similarities between Christianity and the socialistic movement, Wilhelm Weitling had produced an interesting document on these similarities entitled, "Das Evangelium eines armen Sünders" (1843), in which he supported his socialistic theories with quotations from the Bible. See Thilo Ramm, ed., Der Frühsozialismus, Ausgewählte Quellentexte (Stuttgart, 1956), pp. 320-60.

> The history of early Christianity has notable points of resemblance with the modern working-class movement. Like the latter, Christianity was originally a movement of oppressed people: it first appeared as the religion of slaves, of poor people deprived of all rights, of peoples subjugated or dispersed by Rome. Both Christianity and the workers' socialism preach forthcoming salvation from bondage and misery; Christianity places this salvation in a life byond, after death, in heaven; socialism places it in this world, in a transformation of society. Both are persecuted and baited, their adherents are despised and made the objects of exclusive laws, the former as enemies of the human race, the latter as enemies of the state, enemies of religion, the family, social order. And in spite of all persecution, nay, even spurred on by it, they forge victoriously, irresistibly ahead.[11]

But precisely because there were these similarities, Engels felt compelled to reinterpret the book of Revelation into a revolutionary socialistic document. He quoted Ernest Renan with approbation, who had said: "When you want to get a distinct idea of what the first Christian communities were like, do not compare them to the parish congregations of our day; they were rather like local sections of the International Working Men's Association."[12] Thus Chritianity, through Engels' exegesis, became a great revolutionary movement which had gripped the masses in a manner similar to the way socialism was gripping the masses in his own day.[13]

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[11] On Religion, p. 317.

[12] Engels, "The Book of Revelation," ibid., pp. 205-206, and quoted again in "On the History of Early Christianity," ibid, p. 318.

[13] "Book of Revelation," ibid., p. 206.

Engels was of the opinion that there was little of dogmatic content in the book of Revelation, the only book of the Bible he took to be an authentic expression of early Christianity. It consisted mainly ". . . in exhorting the faithful to be zealous in propaganda, to courageous and proud confession of their faith in face of the foe, to unrelenting struggle against the enemy both within and without—and as far as this goes they could just as well have been written by one of the prophetically minded enthusiasts of the International."[14] Nor was there any mention of original sin or justification by faith. As a matter of fact, the faith of these early Christians was quite different from that of the later Constantinian Church and the Nicene creed. Early Christianity's chief tenets had been: the belief in the ". . . sacrifice of the lamb, the imminent return of Christ and the thousand-year kingdom which [was] shortly to dawn . . . ."[15] Instead of preaching a religion of love and self-denial, John had preached ". . . undiluted revenge . . . sound, honest revenge on the persecutors of the Christians. So it is in the whole book . . . ."[16]

We have noted how the historical frame of reference had slowly become secularized between the time of the Reformation and the Enlightenment, and how this secular frame of reference had become canonized in the Marxist theory of history. It should, therefore, be clear that the application of this secular theory of history to the history of Christianity should have certain consequences for the interpretation of that history. As a matter of fact, it might not be saying too much to state that the interpretation of the history of Christianity changed in direct proportion to the changes effected in the total *Weltanschauung* of a given period.

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[14] "On the History of Early Christianity," ibid., pp. 332-33.

[15] Ibid., p. 345.

[16] Ibid., p. 337.

B. Christian and Marxist Eschatology

In many respects the Marxist theory of history is simply the reincarnation of the Christian theory of history *sans* its Christian element: it is the Christian theory brought down to earth—secularized. An excellent example of this truth is contained in the comparison of Christian and Marxist eschatology.

Just as Christianity is a religion of hope, so also does Marxism preach a doctrine of hope. And this doctrine of hope is preached to a certain class, to the downtrodden masses. But the hope of the proletariat does not hinge on the intervention of an imagined omnipotent God, rather, it hinges on the proletariats' own revolutionary action in conformity with the dialectical laws of history. Thus the oppressed becomes the realizer of his own hope.

Both Marx and Engels fully realized the role this eschatological hope had played in the history of Christianity, and the role it played in making a revolutionary class out of the proletariat. Writing to Domela Nieuwenhuis on February 22, 1881, two years before his death Marx said:

> . . . The doctrinaire and necessarily fantastic anticipations of the programme of action for a revolution of the future only divert us from the struggle of the present. The dream that the end of the world was at hand inspired the early Christians in their struggle with the Roman Empire and gave them confidence in victory. Scientific insight into the inevitable disintegration of the dominant order of society continually proceeding before our eyes, and the ever-growing passion into which the masses are scourged by the old ghosts of government—while at the same time the positive development of the means of production advances with gigantic strides—all this is a sufficient guarantee that with the moment of the outbreak of a real proletarian revolution there will also be given the conditions (though these are certain not to be idyllic) of its next immediate _modus operandi_.[17]

Engels was equally aware of the latent power in an eschatological hope. In "On the History of Early Christianity," he pointed to this hope and its role in early Christian history. "Here [in the book of Revelation] we have neither the dogma nor the morals of later Christianity but instead a feeling that one is struggling against the whole world and that the struggle will be a victorious one; an eagerness for the struggle and a certainty of victory which are totally lacking in Christianity of today . . . ."[18]

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[17] _Selected Correspondence_, p. 387

We have already seen that Engels recognized the latent power in this eschatological hope, and that this hope was for a better future, be it in heaven or on earth. In his essay on early Christianity he was certain that the Christian hope lay in the hope of salvation in a life after death—[19] and yet not so certain. He seemed to think that the John of Revelations believed this Kingdom of God was at hand and would be inaugurated 'shortly,' and with its inauguration the world would be judged by God and the Christians revenged.[20] Thus it seemed that the kingdom John was speaking of was an earthly one.

Engels' essay on early Christianity was first printed in the German Social Democratic journal, Die Neue Zeit, 1894, edited by Karl Kautsky. The latter had just prepared his Die Vorläufer des neueren Sozialismus for the press in which he touched on the same topic, and in a letter Kautsky now wanted to know whether the Millenium was to be interpreted as a this-worldly or an other-worldly phenomenon. "You say the chiliastic expectation of the Millenium was an other-worldly expectation. I took it to be very much this-worldly. Whether one places the expectation of the Millenium into a heavenly earth or an earthly heaven really does not make too much difference. The Apocalypse permits both interpretations. The decisive point, however, is that the Millenium is to be ushered in by a heavenly, non-human power."[21]

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[18] On Religion, p. 330.

[19] "Christianity places this salvation in a life beyond, after death, in heaven." Ibid., p. 316.

[20] Ibid., p. 336.

In his reply, Engels stated that the Millenium could be understood either as a this-worldly or as an other-worldly phenomenon. However, it was a phenomenon which could become a reality only "after death, in heaven," or on earth only after the second coming of Christ and the resulting transfiguration of the saints. In both instances, it could not take place in this life.[22] Kautsky maintained, however, that one could still view the Millenium as this-worldly insofar as ". . . the Christians, who will experience it, will do so without having to die first."[23] And in the early years of the history of Christianity, he continued, the believers were convinced that they would experience it in their lifetime.[24]

However, even if one interpreted the Millenium in a this-worldly sense, the crucial difference between the eschatological hope of the Christian and that of the Marxist remained the one

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[21] Kautsky to Engels, July 23, 1894, E/K, Briefwechsel, p. 406.

[22] Engels to Kautsky, July 28, 1894, ibid., p. 407.

[23] Kautsky to Engels, August 4, 1894, ibid., p. 409.

[24] Ibid.

Kautsky pointed out, namely, that the Christian Millenium would be ushered in by an other-worldly power—the Christian God; in the Marxist theory this would be done by means of the proletarian revolution, by man himself. This difference is important not only because of its implications for the action of the Marxist in history; it is important above all because it points to the great similarities of the Marxist overall historical scheme with the Christian outline of history, but also because it points to the essential difference—the secularization of the Christian eschatological hope into the Marxist classless society of the future.

C. Christianity as Ideological Superstructure

These similarities and this difference are also important for our understanding of the role of religion in general or of Christianity in particular, in the Marxist system of material base and ideological superstructure. In Chapter I we recorded that Marx and Engels had relegated Christianity to that realm of the ideological superstructure which was farthest removed from the material base. Yet, as Engels maintained even toward the end, although the interconnection became more and more difficult to trace, it was there nevertheless. This meant that, although Christianity had played a role in history, yet it had no essential reality of its own, and was only the reflection in the minds of men of a perverted reality here on earth. Since Christianity had no essential reality of its own, the Christian element could, under certain circumstances, be deleted from history.[25] Christian history would then become secularized and the Christian eschatological hope become an earthly one.

What was the picture of Christianity like that Marx and Engels conjured up when they moved from the theoretical to the practical study of early Christianity? Aside from a few scattered remarks, Marx never really concerned himself with the problem. For him the essential issue had already been solved. In his "Zur Kritik der Hegelschen Rechtsphilosophie," he stated that, as far as Germany was concerned, the criticism of religion, and thus the prerequisite of all criticism, had already been accomplished.[26] The ground for this criticism had been prepared by Hegel who had equated the Christian idea of progress toward a final goal with the rational world spirit which governed history.[27] After him came David Friedrich Strauss, a student of Hegelian philosophy, who maintained that much of the Bible was mythological; but, according to Marx, Strauss had still approached the problem as a theologian and hence as a prejudiced party.[28] He was followed by Feuerbach, the non-theological Hegelian, who, going out from an unprejudiced point of view, saw religion in its true light for the first time.[29] The importance of Feuerbach for the young Marx is made obvious by the latter's admonition to speculative theologians like Strauss that the only way they could arrive at truth and freedom would be to pass through the "Feuer-bach." Feuerbach was the purgatory through which everyone should pass in order to see religion as it was.[30]

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[25] These 'circumstances' will be pointed out in Part II.

[26] M/E, Werke, I, 378.

[27] Löwith, Weltgeschichte und Heilsgeschehen, pp. 56-58.

In what way had Feuerbach become the door to the correct evaluation of Christianity? He had shown that man made his own religion, religion did not determine man. It was at this point that Marx stepped on the scene. Man, said Marx, in his "Zur Kritik der Hegelischen Rechtsphilosophie," makes religion, religion does not make man. Religion is the self-consciousness and self-reliance of man who has either not yet found his true self or has lost it again.

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[28] Marx, "Luther als Schiedsrichter zwischen Strauss und Feuerbach," M/E, Werke, I, 26.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Ibid.

But man is no abstract, other-worldly being. Man—that is the world of man, the state, society. This state, this society produces religion which is a perverted self-consciousness because it is the reflection in man's mind of a perverted world. Religion is the universal theory of this world, its encyclopedaic compendium, its logic in popular form . . . its general consolation and justification. Religion is the imaginary realization of human nature because human nature as yet does not possess any true reality.[31] Man, who had sought for a superman in the imaginary reality of the heavens, found only a pallid reflection of himself. But man could not in the long run be satisfied with this false reality, he would have to find his true reality here on earth.[32] It was the attempt to aid man in finding his true reality here on earth that captivated Marx's attention from now on.

Marx went on to state that it was the duty of history to establish the truth of this world now that the truth of the heavens had been destroyed, and it was the duty of philosophy, the handmaiden of history,[33] to unmask the alienation of man in the real world since the alienation of man in the 'Holy City' had already been unmasked. Hence, the criticism of religion, which was completed for Marx, had to be changed into a criticism of this world and its institutions, into a criticism of law and politics.[34] We have seen that it was from this criticism of society that Marx and Engels developed their sociological categories which they later applied to the study of history.

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[31] M/E, Werke, I, 378.

[32] Ibid.

[33] In reality history became the handmaiden of philosophy for Marx. See Chapter I, pp. 14-22 of this study.

Religion was, therefore, not a causa sui; it could be explained as the reflection in man's consciousness of specific industrial and trade relationships. These basic relationships produced a certain form of society with a specific form of government which in turn produced a specific form of religious consciousness. Christianity, for example, had no history of its own. The changes in Christianity were only metamorphic and could be explained as changes reflecting the changing forms of production which society had passed through since the beginning of Christianity.[35] But for the time being Marx and Engels did not consider it necessary to trace the development of Christianity by means of a study of the history of the economic progress of mankind,[36] and Marx became less and less interested in the problem of religion as time went on.[37]

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[34] M/E, Werke, I, 379.

[35] Marx and Engels, "Die deutsche Ideologie," Werke, III, 137.

It was Engels who in time came to devote more study to the problem of Christianity, but only after he had written his Bauernkrieg. It is important, however, that we pursue Engels' studies of Christianity because of their influence on Kautsky, Mehring and succeeding generations of Marxists. The foundation for Engels' later efforts was laid in his and Marx's critical review of G.F. Daumer's

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[36] In a letter of Engels to Marx of October 18, 1846, concerning the latest writings of Feuerbach, "Das Wesen der Religion," and "Epigonen," the former wrote: "Mit Ausnahme der wenigen, hier spezifierten Sätze ist nichts zu bemerken. Über die geschichtliche Entwicklung der verschiedenen Religionen erfährt man nichts. Höchstens werden Beispiele aus ihnen zu(ge)geben, um die obigen Trivialitäten zu beweisen. Die Hauptmasse des Artikels besteht aus Polemik gegen Gott und die Christen . . . Wenn man über die Trivialitäten über Naturreligion, Polytheismus, Monotheismus etwas sagen wollte, müsste man die wirkliche Entwicklung dieser Religionsformen dagegenstellen, wozu man sie erst studieren müsste. Das geht uns aber für unsere Arbeit ebensowenig an, wie seine Erklärung des Christentums . . . ." M/E, Werke, XXVII, 57-58.

[37] After 1846 few letters of Marx touch on the topic of Christianity. In a letter to Engels of January 20, 1864, he came to speak briefly on Ernest Renan's Life of Christ, but after that little is said on the topic.

Die Religion des neuen Weltalters. Versuch einer combinatorisch--aphoristischen Grundlegung of 1850. In this review, Marx and Engels tried to establish a general outline of early Christian history in the following manner:

> The same shameless superficiality allows Mr. Daumer to ignore completely that Christianity was proceeded by the complete collapse of ancient 'world conditions' of which Christianity was the mere expression; that 'completely new world conditions' arose not externally through Christianity but only when the Huns and Germans fell externally on the corpse of the Roman Empire; that after the Germanic invasion the 'new world conditions' did not adopt themselves to Christianity but that Christianity itself likewise changed with every new phase of these world conditions. We should like Mr. Daumer to give us an example of the old world conditions changing with a new religion without the 'mightiest external and abstract political' convulsions setting in at the same time.
>
> It is clear that with every great historical upheaval of social conditions the outlooks and ideas of men, and consequently their religious ideas, are revolutionized . . . .[38]

Just as Hegel, Strauss, and Feuerbach had prepared the ground for Marx and Engels' position vis-à-vis religion in general and Christianity in particular thus far, it was Bruno Bauer's further criticism which proved to be the launching pad for Engels' final delineation of Christian history.[39] Engels realized that the Enlightenment criticism of Christianity, that all religions, and therefore Christianity too, were the work of deceivers, was not enough. This was especially true since "Hegel had set philosophy the task of showing a rational evolution in world history."[40] One had to explain rationally the development of Christianity. This Bruno Bauer had set out to do.

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[38] M/E, Werke, VII, 201.

The specific problem to be solved was: how had it come about that ". . . the popular masses in the Roman Empire so far preferred this nonsense—which was preached, into the bargain by slaves and oppressed—to all other religions that the ambitious Constantine finally saw in the adoption of this religion of nonsense the best means of exalting himself to the position of autocrat of the Roman world."[41]

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[39] Engels, "Bruno Bauer and Early Christianity," On Religion, p. 195. Speaking of the origins of Christianity and Bruno Bauer's contribution to the solution of the problem, Engels said: "Bruno Bauer has contributed far more to the solution of this question than anybody else. No matter how much the half-believing theologians of the period of reaction have struggled against him since 1849, he irrefutably proved the chronological order of the Gospels and their mutual interdependence, shown by Wilke from the purely linguistic standpoint, by the very contents of the Gospels themselves. He exposed the utter lack of scientific spirit of Strauss' vague myth theory according to which anybody can hold for historical as much as he likes in the Gospel narrations. And if almost nothing from the whole content of the Gospels turns out to be historically provable—so that even the historical existence of Jesus can be questioned—Bauer has thereby only cleared the ground for the solution of the question . . . ." See also Peter Meinhold, Robert Werner and Claus D. Kernig, "Christentum," in Sowjetsystem und Demokratische Gesellschaft, vol. I (Freiburg/B, 1966), 995-1. (Hereafter this encyclopedia is cited as SDG.)

[40] Engels, "Bruno Bauer and Early Christianity," p. 194.

Bauer had already exposed the Gospels as historically questionable and had then gone on to explain the origins of Christian thought,[42] but he had failed to explain the reasons for its popular appeal and its rapid growth to a world religion. Engels accepted Bauer's explanation of the origins of Christian thought even though the explanation did not fit into his scheme of base and superstructure.[43] Thus he had to content himself with tracing the traditions Bauer thought had formed the Christian religion. Where and under what economic conditions these traditions had arisen,

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[41] Ibid., p. 195.

[42] "Nicht Paulus, erst recht nicht der unhistorische Jesus, sondern Philo und Seneca sind die Stamväter der Kirche, die von emanzipierten Gruppen gebildet wurde als die Welt unglücklich war . . . ." Manfred Wichelhaus, Kirchengeschichtsschreibung und Soziologie im neunzhnten Jahrhundert und bei Ernst Troeltsch (Heidelberg, 1965), p. 33.

[43] "Die Aufzeichnungen zur 'Geschichte des Urchristentums' (1894/95) weichen vom Bauer-Nekrolog (1882) und dem Artikel über 'Das Buch der Offenbarung' leicht ab. Engels kritisiert Bauers Intellektualisierung des Entstehungsprozesses und die Bedeutsamkeit Philos, Senecas und der selbstbewussten Schreiber . . . ." Ibid., p. 40, n. 164. See also "Christentum," SDG, pp. 995-2 to 996-1.

Engels failed to determine. Nor was he able to show what unique economic conditions had produced the Christian religion. Following Bauer, Engels believed that the Christian religion had come about as a result of the fusion of various traditions which had become common currency among the vulgar.[44] What he did attempt to show was that the spread of Christianity was due to the oppressed status of the lower classes in the Roman cities and provinces. More and more, stated Engels, the inhabitants of the Empire had been divided into rich and poor. The conquered territories had been assimilated into the Roman system, and as a result their political and social peculiarities had been destroyed. With the destruction of the material base of these conquered societies, their religion was doomed to destruction also.

These lower classes, despairing of material salvation in a disintegrating society, turned instead to a spiritual salvation, "a consolation in their consciousness to save them from utter despair."[45] This consolation _had_ to take on a religious form, "the same as anything which had to grip the masses both then and as late as the 17th century."[46] Of those who turned to the Christian religion as a consolation for the worsening economic and political conditions, the majority had been slaves.

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[44] In one instance Engels went so far as to say, "Religions are founded by people who feel a need for religion themselves and have a feeling for the religious needs of the masses . . . ." "Bruno Bauer and Early Christianity," p. 197.

[45] _Ibid_., p. 202.

But why had Christianity been able to become a world religion? Engels had thus far attempted an explanation why it had become the religion of the downtrodden masses, but he had as yet not answered the essential question. By rejecting "all national religions and their common ceremonies and addressing itself to all peoples without distinction," said Engels, Christianity became "the first possible world religion."[47] In the second place, Engels continued, Christianity had had an answer to the contemporary complaints about the wickedness and the moral corruption of the times. It pointed to man's sinfulness as the cause for the corruption of the world, and in the light of the times, said Engels, no one had been able to deny the truth of this tenet.[48] Through the concept of atonement for this sin by the self-sacrifice of the Son of God, Christianity had also solved this problem.

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[46] Ibid.

[47] Ibid.

[48] Ibid., pp. 202-203.

Thus Christianity had achieved universal appeal, but the answer to the way in which it gained the actual status of world religion was contained in the first three hundred years of its history. It was during this time that the Christian religion underwent an important development by means of which it accommodated itself to the Roman society and form of government. From the religion of the downtrodden it became more and more the religion of the rulers until it was taken over by Constantine. From this time on to the French Revolution, Christianity had changed time and time again in order to accommodate itself to the new class every time a revolution in the continuing class war took place. With the maturity of the bourgeoisie as a class and its successful revolution against the powers of feudalism, the bourgeoisie produced its own ideology in which religion played little or no part.[49] As a result, the criticism of religion since the French Revolution had become widespread and had progressed to the point where it could be considered completed by Marx and Engels.

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[49] Engels, "Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical Greek Philosophy," On Religion, p. 240.

D. Marx and Engels against Christianity

Although Marx and Engels viewed Christianity as one aspect of the ideological superstructure which would disappear with the coming of communism, and hence should have been content to await the eventual death of Christianity,[50] yet they also turned their criticism against it. This criticism arose in the first place, as we have seen, because religion in general is a perverted self-consciousness resulting from perverted economic and social conditions in the world. In order to escape from these perverted 'real' conditions of the world instead of trying to change them, man imagined a heaven where all things would be set right. But Marx and Engels were concerned precisely with these perverted 'real' conditions of the world which they wanted to change in order to end the alienation of man from himself. It is from this vantage point that their criticism of Christianity becomes understandable.

Christianity is an illusion, a form of alienation, which keeps man from taking up the task of improving the 'real,' the social conditions in which he finds himself. It is the opium of the masses[51] because it deadens the pain endured in this world with the hope of righteousness in another world. But since the other world is an illusion and reality is to be found only in this world, religion is a hindrance to social improvement.

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[50] ". . . da die Religion, an sich inhaltlos, nicht vom Himmel, sondern von der Erde lebt, und mit der Auflösung der verkehrten Realität, deren Theorie sie ist, von selbst stürzt . . . ." Marx to Arnold Ruge, November 30, 1842, M/E, Werke, XXVII, 412.

[51] For a discussion of the term "opium of the masses," in the Marxian vocabulary and its history, see Helmut Gollwitzer, Die Marxistische Religionskritik und der christliche Glaube (München und Hamburg, 1965), pp. 23-28.

Not only, however, did Christianity hinder social improvement, it also actively supported social evils in this world and had done so ever since the time of Constantine when it had become a part of the ideology of the ruling class. In "The Communism of the Paper Rheinischer Beobachter," Marx gave unequivocal expression to these thoughts. "The social principles of Christianity," he said, had "justified the slavery of Antiquity, glorified the serfdom of the Middle Ages," and at present knew "how to defend the oppression of the proletariat, although they make a pitiful face over it." They preached the necessity of a ruling and an oppressed class, justifying all the acts of the oppressor as either the just punishment for original sin and other sins or as trials that God in His infinite wisdom had imposed upon His redeemed. To the oppressed, however, the social principles of Christianity preached submission, cowardice, self-contempt, abasement--in a word--all the qualities of the canaille.[52] Christianity, therefore, in the words of

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[52] On Religion, pp. 83-84. Marx, however, overlooks completely the role Christianity played in the evolution of democracy in England and in other countries.

Nietzsche, was a slave religion. But the proletariat was the revolutionary class of the future and must shake off the shackles of this slave religion in order to concern itself with the revolution in the real world.[53]

This proletarian revolution in the real world was to usher in the classless, communistic social order. However, in the words of Marx, "Communism begins with atheism, but atheism in itself is still far removed from communism, for the latter atheism is a mere abstraction."[54] But why should communism presuppose an atheistic outlook on life? Marx did not give an explicit answer to this question, all he said was that the philanthropy of atheism was a philosophical, an abstract one, whereas the philanthropy of communism immediately became functional in society.[55]

Perhaps Marx's position becomes clearer if we recall how he arrived at the communistic society by proceeding from "the materialist theories of the original goodness of man."[56] In his argumentation

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[53] Marx believed that the proletariat was already beginning to throw off its religious illusions. In a letter to Ludwig Feuerbach, he wrote: "Es ist eine merkwürdige Erscheinung, wie, im Gegensatz zum 18ten Jahrhundert, die Religiösität in den Mittelstand und die höhere Klasse, die Irreligiösität dagegen—aber die Irreligiösität des sich als Mensch empfindenden Menschen—in das französische Proletariat herabgestiegen ist . . . . Der englische Proletarier macht auch Riesenfortschritte, aber es fehlt ihm der Kulturcharakter der Franzosen . . . ." August 11, 1844, M/E, *Werke*, XXVII, 426.

[54] Marx, "Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte," *Frühe Schriften*, p. 595.

[55] *Ibid*.

[56] "Heilige Familie," M/E, *Werke*, II, 138. See also Chapter I, note 24, where the complete passage is quoted.

Marx pointed out that if man was good then one need only change the evil economic environment in order to restore man to this original goodness. The communistic mode of production would do this. In the communistic society man would be able to end his alienation from himself. Consequently there was no need for salvation in any religious sense; man would, in effect, save himself once he had gained control of the means of production. Thus, since communism was derived deductively from Marx's humanism, it followed that communism, as the answer to the problem of human alienation, presupposed an atheistic outlook on life.

Marx's humanism, however, was no longer the humanism of an Erasmus or of most of the other humanists of the Renaissance. No matter how far the latter had gone in proclaiming the dignity of man, the ultimate goal had remained a religious one, and it was in reaching this goal that the humanism of Renaissance thinkers achieved its importance.[57] But the humanism of the Renaissance went through a process of secularization as well and as a result Marx's humanism no longer had a transcendental goal. Proceeding from a humanism which had its roots in the material reality of this world, Marx denied the reality of any world but this present material one. All else was sham. Any religion, therefore, could only distract from the task man must set himself of ordering the economic and social relations in this world in such a manner that the complete man could be restored.

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[57] Insofar as this humanism changed from Erasmus to Marx, Erich Fromm's designation of Marx's humanism as the same as that of Erasmus is incorrect. Forward to Marx, Selected Writings, p. xiv. For a discussion of Renaissance humanism, see L.W. Spitz, The Religious Renaissance of the German Humanists (Cambridge, Mass., 1963), pp. 1-19 and 267-93.

In many ways, therefore, the two views of history seen through Christian and Marxist eyes have great similarities. In many ways the Marxist view of history is the Christian view, but with the specifically Christian element taken out. This is perhaps most clearly seen in a comparison of Christian with Marxist anthropology and eschatology. And it would surprise us if these factors would not play a decisive role in the Marxist interpretation of the Reformation especially since this secular Marxist world view has been captured and dogmatized in their theory of history. Exactly what consequences these factors will have for the Marxist interpretation of the Reformation the sequel will teach.

PART TWO

THE PRACTICE OF HISTORY

CHAPTER IV

ENGELS, ZIMMERMANN, AND THE SOURCES

Any study of the Marxist interpretation of the Reformation must of necessity begin with a thorough examination of the factual accuracy and the interpretation of these facts in the Geschichte des grossen deutschen Bauernkrieges by Wilhelm Zimmermann,[1] for it is this study and this alone which Engels used as the basis for his pamphlet on the Peasant War.[2] Zimmermann's volumes appeared in the years between 1841 and 1843, Engels' study in 1850. The former's revised edition appeared in 1856 after his disillusionment over the failure of the revolution of 1848. The Zimmermann who revised his earlier work was a changed man and as a result his new edition was a somewhat more sober study.[3] Particularly striking are the revisions he made on the sections dealing with Thomas Müntzer. Yet Engels seems not to have approved of the changes Zimmermann made. In his introduction to the 1875 edition of his Bauernkrieg, Engels stated that Zimmermann quite apparently had aged since he had written the first version. At that time his revolutionary ardor had still been very much alive.[4] An indication that Engels had read the revised edition but preferred the first is given in Kautsky's letter of December 21, 1888, to Engels in which the former wrote concerning the planned edition of Zimmermann's Bauernkrieg by Wilhelm Blos for the Dietz Verlag in Stuttgart. In this letter Kautsky wrote: "Dietz wants to issue a new edition of Zimmermann's Bauernkrieg in the 'International Library' series. You once told me the old edition was better than the new one. Could you elaborate on this point? It would be well if Dietz could take this into consideration for the new edition."[5] The reasons why Engels preferred the first edition to the second will become obvious enough in the course of this chapter. Here it behooves us to make very clear that Engels was solely dependent upon Zimmermann for his facts, and the facts as given in the first edition, not those of the second. Were it not that subsequent Marxist historians have felt called upon to use Engels' study of the Peasant War as the orthodox Marxist study, especially those of communist Russia and East Germany,[6] we should hesitate to dwell at length on such a comparative study of Zimmermann, Engels, and their sources. However, ever since Engels, Marxist historians have maintained that, although Zimmermann had become dated in certain areas, yet he had the best compilation of

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[1] Wilhelm Zimmerman, Geschichte des grossen deutschen Bauernkrieges, 3 vols. (Stuttgart, 1841-1843). A second edition, very considerably changed, appeared in 1856 (Stuttgart) in two volumes. This second edition was published anew in 1939 with an introduction by Hermann Barge (Naunhof and Leipzig). Other editions have come from the hands of the German Social Democrats and, after the Second World War, from the Marxist Press of East Germany. The first such edition was that of Wilhelm Blos (hrsg.), Dr. W. Zimmermann's Grosser Deutscher Bauernkrieg (Dietz, Stuttgart, 1891). It was this same edition which the East Germans republished in 1952. We shall have occasion to discuss the changes which Zimmermann himself made in his revision and those which Blos and the East Germans have subsequently made later on in the course of this study.

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[2] Friedrich Engels, "Vorbemerkung zu 'Der deutsche Bauernkrieg'" for the 1870 and 1875 editions in M/E, Werke, VII. "Sie [Engels' Bauernkrieg] macht keinen Anspruch daruf, selbstständig erforschtes Material zu liefern. Im Gegenteil, der gesamte auf die Bauernaufstände und auf Thomas Müntzer sich beziehende Stoff ist aus Zimmermann genommen . . . ," p. 531. See also: the Introduction by Franz Mehring to Friedrich Engels, Der deutsche Bauernkrieg (Berlin, 1908), p. 7; Engels, Der deutsche Bauernkrieg (Berlin, 1965), p. 147, note 21. The first edition of Engels' Bauernkrieg, which appeared in the Neue Rheinische Zeitung. Politisch ökonomische Revue (ed., Karl Marx, 1850), had only the following note on p. 35: "Wir folgen in den chronologischen Daten den Angaben Zimmermanns, auf die wir bei dem Mangel ausreichender Quellen im Ausland angewiesen sind und die für den Zweck dieses Artikels vollständig genügen."

[3] Zimmermann, Bauernkrieg (1856), I, XXXV-XXXVI. In the Introduction to this second edition Zimmermann himself stated: "Ich selbst bin inzwischen nicht nur durch Jahre und Erfahrung überhaupt reifer, kühler und massvoller geworden, sondern auch mitten in einer ähnlichen Volksbewegung gestanden und habe zum Teil darin mitgehandelt; ich habe an der lebendigen Gegenwart Beobachtungen und Vergleichungen anstellen können, und ich habe auch daraus manches gelernt. Das könnte auf die Auffassung und Darstellung der Menschen und Dinge in meinem Buche nicht ohne tieferen Einfluss bleiben; es musste dadurch vieles in Form und Inhalt richtiger, wirklicher, wahrer werden. Alles, was mir jugendlich und idealisierend an der früheren Gestalt des Buches, alles, was nicht zur Sache notwendig zugehören schien, alles Parteifarbige und Tendenziöse habe ich ausgeschnitten, ganz Neues eingefügt, nicht nur sehr vieles, sondern das Ganze in Form umgestaltet. So ist das Buch in Form und Inhalt grossenteils ein ganz neues geworden . . . ."

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[4] M/E, Werke, VII, 531: "Daher hatte der alte Zimmermann Freude an seinem Gegenstand. Derselbe revolutionäre Instinkt, der hier überall für die unterdrückte Klasse auftritt, machte ihn später zu einem der besten auf der äussersten Linken in Frankfurt. Seitdem soll er freilich etwas gealtert haben." The last sentence was added in 1875.

[5] Kautsky to Engels, December 21, 1888, in Benedict Kautsky (ed.), Friedrich Engels' Briefwechsel mit Karl Kautsky (Vienna, 1955), p. 226. As far as I can see, Engels never responded to Kautsky's question and Blos used Zimmermann's second edition for his edition which appeared in 1891.

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[6] We shall have occasion to note, in the course of this study, that rigid interpretation among Marxist historians goes hand in hand with a dictatorial regime. There was much more diversity of historical interpretation among members of the German Socialist movement than there is in any Marxist country today.

the facts available.[7] Therefore it is necessary, in order to ascertain the factual accuracy of Engels and the Marxist historians who depend upon him, to check into the accuracy and the sources of Zimmermann's facts.[8] That is the one purpose of this chapter.

A second purpose is to enquire into the differences in the interpretation between Zimmermann and Engels. Engels stated that his study of the Peasant War was a reinterpretation of Zimmermann on the basis of the materialist interpretation of history.[9] If both Zimmermann and Engels used the same facts but could come to differing conclusions we must know why this was possible. We must also discover to what extent, and in which aspects, the interpretation of one departed from the other. At the same time we want to note the points of agreement in their interpretation and the foundation upon which these points of agreement rest. Lastly, if this enquiry into Zimmermann's factual accuracy should point to the need for supplementation, or even revision, we must determine what effect, if any, this should have on the present Marxist interpretation of the Reformation.

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[7] Engels, Vorbemerkung, 1870: M/E, Werke, VII, 531. "Sein Buch [Zimmermann's], obwohl hie und da lückenhaft, ist immer noch die beste Zusammenstellung des Tatsächlichen . . . ." Mehring, in his introduction to the 1908 edition of Engels' Bauernkrieg modified this slightly: ". . . In allem Tatsächlichen stützt er [Engels] sich auf Zimmermanns Geschichte des Bauernkrieges, die auch heute noch, obgleich sie nicht nur, wie Engels im Jahre 1870 von ihr sagte, hier und da lückenhaft, sondern auch in manchen Einzelheiten veraltet sein mag, immer noch die beste Zusammenstellung des Tatsächlichen bietet . . . ," p. 7. In 1952, the Dietz Verlag of Berlin reissued, with some modifications, the Blos edition of Zimmermann with the words of Engels (just quoted) about the factual accuracy of Zimmermann on the page next to the title page. Gerhard Schilfert, in his review for the ZfG, I (1953), No. 1, 152-57, points out some of the weaknesses of Zimmermann, particularly with regard to Thüringen and Thomas Müntzer, but maintains that a new publication of Zimmermann's work was a dire necessity.

[8] Even Gerhard Schilfert states: ". . . Da Engels von vornherein klarstellt, dass er mit seiner Schrift keinen Anspruch erhebt, selbstständig erforschtes Material zu liefern, sondern dieses von Zimmermann übernimmt, hätte eine Kritik des dargestellten Sachverhaltes bei diesem einzusetzen." But Schilfert fails to do so. "Engels' Schrift vom Bauernkrieg und die Quellen seiner Geschichtsauffassung"(Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Halle/S., 1948), p. 48.

A. The French Revolution and the Beginnings of a Reinterpretation of the Peasant War

To understand Zimmermann's interpretation of the Peasant War we must recall that, although he was educated as a theologian and later on in life took up pastoral duties, he was, by inclination and association, a Liberal of the Württemberg school and a man who saw the Reformation from a liberal, political point of view, not least of all because he himself became actively involved in the political movement which led directly to the revolution of 1848. In Tübingen, where he studied, he became intimately associated with Paul Pfitzer, the herald of Swabian Liberalism before 1848, and with David Friedrich Strauss[10] whose Leben Jesu caused a sensation not only in the theological circles of his day. The struggle for political freedom was the only meaningful struggle for Zimmermann just as it was for many other intellectuals who were caught up in the liberal ideals of their time. The tendency to see the word "freedom" writ large in the Reformation and the Peasant War was not unique to Zimmermann.[11] Ever since the Enlightenment, and particularly since the French Revolution, historians and thinkers began to see other aspects of the Reformation period than just the religious one. Undoubtedly the events of the French Revolution opened the eyes of many to the social evils in society and to the causes of social revolutions. Historians began to look at the Peasant War through the eyes of the French Revolution and, although most of these historians were repulsed by the extremism of the second phase of this revolution, yet their ideals, the ideals of the Enlightenment and the early revolutionary period, were not destroyed.

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[9] Cf., Engels, Vorbemerkung to the 1870 edition of his "Bauernkrieg." M/E, Werke, VII, 531-32.

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[10] Hans Hausherr, "Wilhelm Zimmermann als Geschichtsschreiber des Bauernkrieges," Zeitschrift für Württembergische Landesgeschichte, X (1951), 169.

[11] Moriz Carriere, Die Philosophische Weltanschauung der Reformationszeit (Leipzig, 1887), 2nd edition, for example, writing in his book just prior to the rebellions of 1848, seemed to be convinced that the central and pervading theme of the Weltanschauung of the time of the Reformation was one of renewed emphasis upon the individual and his freedom. In the full title which adds the words, "in ihren Beziehungen zur Gegenwart," it is implied that this theme has implications for the writer's own day; and in the Forward he adds the fond hope: "möge es ein Denkmal unseres gemeinsamen Strebens sein."

The reaction to the French Revolution was not, however, always the same and is reflected in the varied treatments which the historians from 1790 to Zimmermann gave to the Reformation and the Peasant War. Georg Sartorious,[12] friend of Goethe, the Enlightenment, and the early French revolutionary period, decried previous histories of the Reformation and the Peasant War for their theologically polemical nature. He wrote his history of the Peasant War because he had noted a strong similarity between the factors which had caused the religious and social upheavals of the sixteenth century and those which had caused the French Revolution in his own day.[13] Sartorius did not glorify the Peasant War as Zimmermann was to do later on, rather, he used it to demonstrate how people, brought up in ignorance and suppressed by equally ignorant and despotic overlords, will rise in revolt when incited by "Schwärmer" and radicals. Enlighten the rulers to allow the common man to become educated and to gain a measure of freedom, and this same common man will not fall prey to the blandishments of the fanatics. Enlightenment, therefore, was not responsible for revolution, tyranny and ignorance was. Enlightenment was much more the only means by which that progress could be fostered which history had made ever since man began to use his rational faculties.[14]

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[12] Georg Sartorius, Versuch einer Geschichte des deutschen Bauernkrieges (Frankenthal, 1795).

Neither, except for a few exceptions, did the immediate successors of Sartorius glorify revolution. Georg Theodor Strobel, writing in the Preface of his biography of Thomas Müntzer in the same year as Sartorius, felt himself motivated to write by the events of the French Revolution as well. The restless and turbulent days in which he lived had turned his attention to the unhappy days of 1525, to the time when so many regions in Germany had been so terribly devastated and depopulated. His fervent prayer was that these unhappy days might soon pass and that peace and quiet might once again descend upon his fatherland. Only under these conditions could better times be expected.[15]

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[13] Ibid.,p. 10.

[14] The term used is "gesunder Menschenverstand," and appears very often in the histories of the Reformation period at this time. The period of the Reformation is seen as initiating an era, in which the rational sense of man began to be used more extensively, which led directly to the Aufklärung in spite of the fact that a reaction set in shortly after the Reformation.

This trend, to see a marked similarity between the Peasant War of 1525 and the French Revolution, continued on. Like Sartorius and Strobel, most writers wanted to use the comparison to warn against extremism and party fanaticism, and to call for more humane relations between "reasonable, enlightened" men. Revolution did not and would not bring improvement and progress: improvement would have to come through enlightened education and more equitable relations between men. Thus Streif hoped that the study of the life of Thomas Müntzer, which he had prepared, would serve not only to entertain, but would also teach those who glorified the past in order to promote revolution in the present that good had never yet come from revolution and that one could not expect to create something better by destroying what existed. Progress came slowly and by peaceful means.[16]

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[15] Georg Theodor Strobel, Leben, Schriften und Lehren Thomä Müntzers, des Urhebers des Bauernaufstandes in Thüringen (Nürnberg u. Altdorf, 1795), p. VII.

[16] P. Streif, Thomas Müntzer oder der Thüringische Bauernkrieg (Leipzig, 1836), p. VI.

There was, however, a second line of interpretation which had its source in the period beginning with the French Revolution: it combined a justification of the Peasant War, a justification of revolution, with an ever increasing glorification of Thomas Müntzer.[17] Hammerdörfer, writing in 1793, was of the opinion that, had Müntzer been more fortunate and succeeded in his revolution, his name would be honored by posterity along with those of Stauffacher and Wilhelm Tell. But—misfortune overtook him, and he died under the executioner's axe. The result was that history condemned him and his revolution. Good fortune, on the other hand, had granted victory to Luther and now half of Europe paid homage to his name. Sometimes, was the profound reflection of Hammerdörfer, one could only blush for shame when one considered the historian's profession.[18]

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[17] This is the essential difference between someone like Zimmermann and a person like Sartorius. The former saw in revolution a giant step forward while the latter saw it as a hindrance to progress.

[18] Hammerdörfer, Geschichte der Lutherischen Reformation (Leipzig, 1793), p. 57.

Although both Strobel and von Baczko[19] began a cautious revision of the "Müntzer-legend,"[20] they both expressly rejected Hammerdörfer's interpretation. The most drastic reinterpretation of Müntzer between the interpretation of Hammerdörfer and that of Zimmermann came from the pen of Georg Treitschke in 1811. He professed to find in Müntzer, partly veiled and partly revealed, the ideas of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution. Müntzer's contemporaries, however, caught in the web of their own time, had failed to appreciate the former's genius. It was not until later, in the period of the Enlightenment, that men began to recognize the true greatness of Müntzer.[21]

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[19] L. von Baczko, "Thomas Müntzer," Geschichte und Politik, II (1804), 1-71. Baczko went so far as to say of Müntzer: ". . . Er wäre, vielleicht, hätte er zu unsern Zeiten gelebt, und seine Stimmung mehr durch politische als religiöse Gründe erhalten, denen Männern gleich geworden, die bei Frankreichs Revolution durch gewaltsame Mittel, den einmal vorgesetzten Zweck zu behaupten, und diesem alles aufzuopfern strebten . . . ," p. 70.

[20] See Max Steinmetz, "Zur Entstehung der Müntzer-Legende," in Fritz Klein u. Joachim Streisand, Beiträge zum neuen Geschichtsbild (Berlin, 1956), p. 36.

[21] Georg Carl Treitschke, "Thomas Müntzer," Archiv für Geographie, Historie, Staats- und Kriegskunst (April-May, 1811), 204-205.

In the question of the causes of the Peasant War, all were more or less agreed. The economic and political burdens which the peasants had had to bear had become more and more onerous. At the same time the ideas of freedom, fostered by the successful revolt of Switzerland against the Hapsburg Empire, by the example of the free cities in Germany, and Luther's revolt against a corrupt and exploiting Church, captivated the imagination of the peasants. This coincidence of an increased exploitation of the peasants by their spiritual and temporal lords with the revolt of Luther against the Roman Catholic Church had led directly to the Peasant War. It was not surprising that the peasants had revolted, what is more, their revolt was fully justified; only—revolt had never brought about improvement. The Catholic argument, that Luther had caused the revolt by showing the way in his own revolt against the Church, was vigorously rejected with the argument that the peasants had risen in sporadic revolts long before Luther ever rose in revolt against the Church. No, not Luther, nor even the peasants, were responsible for the revolt; the ignorant, corrupt, and greedy Church and nobility had been responsible.

B. Zimmermann and the Causes of the Peasant War

In the first edition of his Bauernkrieg Zimmermann devoted considerably more time and space to the revolutionary peasant movement prior to the Peasant War of 1525 than he did in the second edition. There is no indication, however, that Zimmermann changed his mind as to the causes of the Peasant War.

Zimmermann began by pointing out that the peasantry, ever since the Middle Ages, had from time to time become involved in conflicts with its spiritual as well as its temporal overlords, partly in order to safeguard its ancient rights and privileges and partly to ward off attempts by the overlords to impose new burdens and restrictions upon it. The struggle in which the peasantry was involved was, therefore, a struggle for freedom. But the struggle was an unequal one except where, as in Switzerland and the Netherlands, geographical factors happened to come to the aid of the peasants. As a rule, however, the latter stood little chance of coming out of the struggle victoriously. Because this was so, the rulers, both spiritual and temporal, were able to limit more and more the freedom of the peasants and to impose heavier taxes and feudal dues upon them. The burdens and restrictions thus imposed did not grow less; on the contrary, they became heavier and more onerous from year to year until they became unbearable.

Consequently, the revolts of the peasants against their overlords began to occur with increasing frequency already in the 15th century and culminated in the great Peasant War of 1525.[22]

The 'real' causes of the Peasant War of 1525 were, therefore, economic and political. The immediate occasion, however, was provided by the Reformation.[23] Until the Reformation, the uprisings had been local and limited in scope; they had had no overall unifying element. Not only did the teaching of Luther aid in spreading the idea of freedom and pave the way for a general criticism of the Church, but it also acted as the much needed unifying factor by giving the suppressed peasants a common cause to fight for, if not exactly a common plan to action.[24] This was particularly true of Southern and Southeastern Germany where the disseminators of the new teaching, usually local preachers who enjoyed the confidence of the common man and who had his welfare at heart, were fearfully persecuted by both Church and State. It was here that revolt raised its head first. Rather than put a stop to the spread of the new teaching, however, the persecution of the preachers only served to arouse the indignation of the peasant, awaken dormant grievances, and fan the flames of revolt.[25] In his determination to protect his preacher from the persecution of Church and State, the common man very often went further than he had intended to, and by so doing he played into the hands of the group which was laying plans for a general revolt.[26]

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[22] In his emphasis on the 'material' causes of the Peasant War Zimmermann stands squarely in the tradition begun by Sartorius in 1795.

[23] "Gemacht had die Reformation den Bauernkrieg nicht; das Gewitter hatte sich vorher aus den tausend materiellen Bedrückungen gebildet, und sie stand schon da, die Wolke mit ihrem rächerischen Blitzen, als Luther und seine Geistesgenossen auftraten; die Reformation wurde nur der Sturm, der die Wetterwolke trieb, zu plötzlichem Ausbruch, und so weit hin, über so viele Lande zugleich." Zimmermann, Bauernkrieg (1841), I, 50.

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[24] Ibid., p. 49. The belief that the causes of the Peasant War were to be found in the 'material' realm and that the Reformation only supplied the spark which ignited the powder keg was common currency in all the writers from Sartorius to Zimmermann. See Sartorius, Bauernkrieg, p. 50; von Baczko, Thomas Müntzer, pp. 11-12; Ferdinand Friedrich Oechsle, Beiträge zur Geschichte des Bauernkrieges in den schwäbisch-fränkischen Grenzlanden (Heilbronn, 1830), pp. 43-56; and Streif, Müntzer, p. IV. Zimmermann himself based his argumentation on a quotation from an article in the Neues Theologisches Journal of 1795 by a certain Prälat von Schmidt, who had begun a collection of documents relating to the Peasant War from the Stuttgart archives which both Oechsle and Zimmermann used.

[25] Zimmermann, Bauernkrieg (1841), I, 91.

But what exactly was the essence of this new teaching that had produced the spark which had ignited the powder keg? Its essence was nothing less than the idea of freedom.[27] Waas has pointed out that, although the 19th century did see an 'inner' and an 'outer' freedom, a religious, an intellectual and a political freedom, these differences were only different aspects of an essential unity.[28] Zimmermann regarded all of history as the struggle for freedom and the dignity of man, and in this larger scheme of history the Peasant War was an especially noteworthy episode.[29] After the Peasant War, however, the center of this struggle for freedom shifted from Germany to the Netherlands, to England, North America, and finally to France.[30] It was easy, therefore, for Zimmermann to read his idea of freedom into the teaching which Luther began to propagate toward the end of the second decade of the 16th century.

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[26] Ibid., p. 97.

[27] The way Zimmermann, as well as his predecessors from Sartorius on, used the word freedom is typical of the 19th century. The sense in which the 19th century used the word was imposed upon the struggle of the peasants of the 15th and 16th centuries. For a study of the German aspect of this problem see Adolf Waas, Die alte Deutsche Freiheit (München und Berlin, 1939), pp. 1-10. The problem is very similar to the one discussed by Herbert Butterfield, The Whig Interpretation of History (London, 1959), for the English liberal historians of the 19th century: the judgment of the past is based on the understanding of the present with no attempts made to discover changes, in this case, in the concept of freedom from the 15th century to their own time.

[28] Waas, Freiheit, p. 1.

[29] Hausherr, Zimmermann, p. 174.

However, Zimmermann was not alone in believing that the essence of the new faith was an individualism and a desire for freedom as the 18th and 19th centuries understood the terms. In varying degrees, all of his predecessors, from Sartorius on, believed the same. Sartorius could therefore maintain that the common man had had no interest in the Dogmenstreit which Luther's pronouncements had occasioned; he had been interested only in remedying the very real abuses of the time which had weighed down upon him. His longing for relief had caused the common man to be attracted above all to those preachers who proclaimed the doctrine of evangelical freedom most energetically. It was only natural that the people should have associated the idea of evangelical freedom with freedom per se, for the term, evangelical freedom, had been only a slogan used by the people behind which everyone had hid his desire for, and dream of, freedom.[31] Von Baczko believed it had been freedom of thought that Luther's contemporaries had understood by the term, evangelical freedom.[32] In one way or another the point was pressed home that Luther's teachings had been wilfully misunderstood and misinterpreted by the people. Oechsle expressed this idea most clearly.[33]

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[30] Zimmermann, Bauernkrieg (1856), I, XXXV.

[31] Sartorius, Bauernkrieg, pp. 62-64.

From this argument it was but a step to the conclusion that the revolutionary peasants had made use of Luther's teaching of evangelical freedom as a façade behind which to hide their insurrectionary plans. Already Sartorius came to this conclusion as we have seen. Once again, however, Oechsle expressed it most clearly. It would certainly not be saying too much, said Oechsle, to assert that a large part of those who gave themselves the appearance of being ardent adherents of the new teaching used the doctrine of evangelical freedom as a cover behind which to hide their selfish desires.[34]

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[32] Von Baczko, Thomas Müntzer, pp. 12-14.

[33] Oechsle, Beiträge, pp. 44-45. "Dass seine [Luther's] Lehre missdeutet und missbraucht wurde, wen könnte das wundern? Denn wann hätte nicht auch das Edelste und Beste ein gleiches Loss gehabt? Er lehrte von christlicher Freiheit, und das durch bürgerliche Lasten zu Boden gedrückte Volk suchte politische Freiheit . . . ."

Zimmermann did not endorse this view completely. He argued that the real leaders of the revolt (die eigentlichen Bewegungsmänner) had not misunderstood Luther's teaching of evangelical freedom; rather, they had gained a different understanding of it as a result of more consequential reasoning from the same point of departure.[35]

A question we must consider at this juncture, because of its importance for the Marxist interpretation is: which factor played the more important role in bringing about the revolution as far as these writers were concerned, the idea of freedom or the material causes? For our historians the question was reduced to the following problem: would the revolution have occurred without the teaching of Luther? Sartorius was of the opinion that, had conditions been different, Luther could have shouted as loudly as only Luther could shout and no revolution would have raised its hideous head. But the conditions were ripe for revolution and, had Luther not shouted, another most certainly would have. Perhaps someone else might even have achieved more.[36] Oechsle too believed that the revolution would have come regardless of the teachings of Luther.[37] Prälat von Schmidt, whom Zimmermann quoted and whose opinion he shared, acknowledged a greater influence of Luther and the Reformation. Without the long-standing abuses, he stated, the Reformation would never have brought about a united uprising; on the other hand, without the Reformation the long-standing abuses would never have been able to rouse the German people to a unified revolution.[38] The two factors were thus complementary causes; neither would have brought about a unified revolutionary movement by itself.

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[34] Ibid., p. 45. Oechsle based his reasoning on Luther himself, quoting a passage from the latter's "Ermahnung zum Frieden auf die zwölf Artikel der Bauernschaft im Schwaben," WA, 18, 331. In this passage Luther warned both peasants and princes about misusing the Scriptures. In his "wieder die räuberischen und mörderischen Rotten der Bauern," WA, 18, 357, Luther was much more specific in his accusations against the peasants. It does not take too much imagination to move from this position to that of Engels who claimed that Christianity was a mere façade behind which the peasants, and particularly Thomas Müntzer, hid their real designs. See Engels, Bauernkrieg, p. 353. (The edition cited throughout is the one that appears in M/E, Werke, VII, pp. 327–413.)

[35] Zimmermann, Bauernkrieg (1841), I, 51.

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[36] Sartorius, Bauernkrieg, pp. 58-60.

[37] Oechsle, Beiträge, p. 48.

[38] Quoted in Zimmermann, Bauernkrieg (1841), I, 50.

C. Zimmermann and the Peasants

What role did the peasants play in Zimmermann's history of the Peasant War? In the beginning of this chapter we noted that, nearly without exception, the historians of the Peasant War from Hammerdörfer to Zimmermann had viewed the peasant cause as a just cause. However, the greater number of them condemned revolution as a means of solving existing social evils. They were of the opinion that revolution did not bring improvement, perhaps because their perspective had been clouded by the 'Reign of Terror' of the French Revolution. At any rate, improvement and progress was a slow process for them and would come only with the increasing enlightenment of man. Zimmermann shared this opinion, but with a difference. He believed that revolution, if successful, could prove to be a giant stride in the forward march of progress. England and America were shining examples of this truth. The peasants and their leaders, therefore, were the party of progress whereas the princes and the Luther after 1522 were the forces of reaction trying to retain the *status quo*, at least in the temporal realm.

Zimmermann, however, did not simply divide the forces involved in this struggle into progressive and reactionary camps along class lines: it was not simply a matter of dividing the participants into oppressors and oppressed for there had been those of the ruling class that had taken the side of the peasants on the basis of principles. But Zimmermann was quite aware that, had the revolution been successful, a new form of government would probably have been established which would have taken the power, and possibly the possessions, away from the ruling princes. At the very least, the abuses would have been done away with. He pointed out with approval that even Müntzer had been willing to allow the princes a place in his Bund.[39] They were not to be ostracized from the new social order; rather they were to be integrated into it and made an equal part of it. Thus it was a principle to which the forces of progress gave assent, a principle to which all enlightened people must give assent, for the principle of greater freedom and more rational government was a principle which lay in the very nature of things.

It was for this reason that Zimmermann took the side of all those who seemed to be working toward a rule of greater freedom and rationality. It was for this reason that he found glowing words with which to praise the deeds of Franz von Sickingen and Ulrich von Hutten who, according to him, had attempted to reform the German constitution in the direction of greater freedom.[40] Not only among the lower classes who were being oppressed and abused could one find adherents of this principle of freedom, but everywhere where rational, enlightened men met.

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[39] See below, pp. 167-68.

[40] Zimmermann, Bauernkrieg (1841), I, 355, stated: "Durch Wahrheit zur Freiheit, durch Freiheit zu immer lichterer Wahrheit, das stand ihm vor der Seele. Jene sah er durch die Priester, Diese durch die Fürsten unterdrückt. Gegen beide begann er den Kampf mit den Waffen des Geistes, gegen die Finsterniss und gegen die Bedrücker . . . ."

Yet, if the leaders of the Peasant War and the peasants themselves had allied themselves to the forces of progress, Müntzer and his party formed the shock troops of this progress; it was in the thought of the latter that Zimmermann espied the 19th century in embryo. But not everyone had belonged to Müntzer's party, although Zimmermann tried to extend the former's influence and his Anabaptist disciples to all parts of the Empire. Zimmermann conceded that the revolt in the South had been motivated by more conservative objectives than the revolt in the North led by Thomas Müntzer, but this did not mean that the movement in the South was not progressive; both the less radical and the more radical groups had been for progress, progress as understood by the 19th-century Liberal, Zimmermann.

Zimmermann's attitude toward the peasants, however, was a somewhat mixed one. At one point he chided Müntzer for advocating an equality beyond the realm of realization.[41] Elsewhere he was to state that instead of submitting itself to the wisdom of its leaders, the mass of humanity, in this case the peasants, very often went its own anarchic way and thus failed to realize the goals it might otherwise have achieved.[42] It would seem, therefore, that Zimmermann believed there was a natural social order, an order in which those endowed with the gifts of leadership should lead and those not so endowed should follow, and that the relationship between the leader and the led should be regulated according to the laws of nature. Exactly what these laws were, he failed to state with any clarity, but that this natural law did not imply the absolute equality of all men can be seen from his criticism of Müntzer's social ideals.

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[41] See below, pp. 167-68.

A further indication that Zimmermann did not think too highly of the common man is contained in his obvious approval of what he thought was Müntzer's use of mystical language, accompanied by signs and wonders, to cloak his obviously rationalist thought.[43] The fact that Zimmermann condoned this action on the part of Müntzer puts him into that category of thinkers who still thought that religion was good for the masses, but not for the enlightened or the educated. Although Zimmermann was perhaps more radical than most of the other Liberals of 1847 who found themselves caught between a potential conservative reaction and a revolutionary left, he still demonstrated many of the characteristics of this group. And for them anarchy was worse, or at the very best, just as bad as despotism. This does not mean, however, that Zimmermann had no compassion for the plight of the downtrodden masses; quite on the contrary. He only bemoaned the fact that they failed to be tractable and to let themselves be led by the enlightened who wanted to lead them to greater freedom and a better station in society.

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[42] Zimmermann, Bauernkrieg (1841), I, 360.

[43] See below, pp. 176-77.

It is quite obvious, and has already been pointed out, that Zimmermann sympathized with the peasants and their leaders in their struggle against the forces of despotism. But there was no notion of an inherent class conflict between ruler and ruled in his thought. He felt it was morally repugnant that one group should exploit another and therefore he defended the right to revolt of the exploited group. He called for a more just relationship between the two groups, a relationship regulated by law. Basic concepts of humanity and common sense demanded that everyone be accorded fundamental human rights and not be hindered from reaching that position in society commensurate with his ability. Within this frame of reference the peasant had certainly had the right to present, and expect to see granted, the demands he had made in the 16th century. At the very least, the abuses should have been abolished.

Zimmermann did not stop to ask the question whether the basic demands the peasants and their leaders put forth were forward looking or not, whether they went beyond that which they had once possessed or whether they merely demanded the abolition of abuses which had become attached to the freedoms they had once had. In the beginning he had stated that the peasants had risen in sporadic revolts ever since the early Middle Ages, on the one hand to protect existing freedoms and on the other hand to ward off new and more onerous burdens.[44] But abuses had crept in nonetheless because the struggle had been an unequal one. Now, however, as we have seen, he stated that their struggle was a struggle for freedom and therefore also for progress, for freedom was the goal of history. Müntzer and his party had demonstrated these progressive ideas in a very particular way. From this one would have to conclude that had Zimmermann been asked whether the goals of the peasants in the South, which he admitted were directed more toward the abolition of existing abuses than toward radical revolution,[45] were progressive, he would have had to admit that they were not, for they looked backwards to ideal conditions in the past. On the other hand, however, he saw in Müntzer and his Anabaptist emissaries the radical wing of the movement which was progressive indeed, containing in embryo many of the ideas which the Enlightenment was later to accept as fundamental.

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[44] See above, p. 124.

[45] See below, pp. 182-83.

D. Zimmermann and Luther[46]

Before delineating the picture Zimmermann drew of Luther, it is necessary to note briefly how Zimmermann viewed Christianity, for his view of Christinaity must of necessity determine, at least to a certain degree, his appraisal of Luther.

In many respects Zimmermann still saw the history of Christianity through the eyes of the Enlightenment. To him the Bible was mankind's most holy bill of rights.[47] The essential teaching of Jesus contained in it—that all men are brothers and children of the one Father, God—when realized, would bring freedom and happiness to mankind; it would abolish all servility and all class distinctions and all their attendant evils. But tyrants, spiritual as well as secular, had been able to subjugate the people into physical, mental, and religious bondage. Upon this bondage despotism had built its empire, aided by crafty priests who, claiming to base their reasoning on the teachings of the Bible, made this book into the exponent of a law of servitude in order to sanction the rule of the oppressor. In place of the true teachings of Jesus the people were taught to believe in superstitions.[48]

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[46] In a footnote to his chapter on Luther, Zimmermann stated: "Es folgen hier von diesem Kapitel nur einige fragmentarische, unumgängliche Grundgedanken. Das Übrige desselben, so wie das zweite Kapitel: 'Luther und Zwingli' halte ich fur jetzt zurück: Die religiösen Zeitverhältnisse, die sich seit dem Anfang dieses Werkes geändert haben, gebietet dem Protestanten, zu des grossen Luthers grossen Lichtern nicht gerade jetzt seine grossen Schatten aufzuweisen. Die Schwachen werden es nie verstehen, dass viel Licht auch viel Schatten hat." Bauernkrieg (1841), III, 712.

[47] Zimmermann uses the term, "Verfassungsurkunde."

Zimmermann saw the greatness of Luther precisely in this that the latter had given this charter of liberties, this book of books, back to the German people in a German translation. Luther had done even more: he had attacked with great effectiveness the symbol of oppression when he had attacked the corruption of the Church hierarchy. In doing so, Luther had taken the first steps toward reëstablishing equality among Christian men and bringing about greater freedom. Regrettably, however, there was another side to Luther—a dark side. Out of this initially revolutionary Luther there emerged a reactionary Luther. Luther stopped at the halfway mark on the road leading to freedom because he either could not or would not draw the logical consequences from his own teaching. He failed to advocate the abolition of the secular tyranny while advocating the abolition of the spiritual tyranny.

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[48] Zimmermann, Bauernkrieg (1841), I, 348.

Zimmermann, like the other historians of the Peasant War under consideration here, was concerned with the life of Luther only insofar as it impinged upon the course and outcome of that Peasant War. Consequently, he divided Luther's life into three main periods: that before 1517; that from 1517 to 1521; and the period from 1521 to 1525.[49] In the period before 1517 Luther was not a public figure, therefore, this period was of little interest to Zimmermann. It lay far outside the sphere of his interests to enquire into the roots of Luther's thought, into his theological development, for Zimmermann was primarily interested in the political effect of these teachings.[50] The second period from 1517 to 1521, and the third period, from 1521 to 1525, were of vital interest to Zimmermann because these were the periods of Luther's involvement in, and rejection of, the revolutionary peasant movement. Given Zimmermann's political orientation and his belief that the Peasant War was a great epoch in man's struggle for freedom and human dignity, it is little wonder that Luther should interest him only insofar as the latter affected this struggle.

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[49] Ibid., p. 347.

[50] The historiographical problem of Luther's involvement in the Peasant War has remained essentially the same since Zimmermann's time: those who view this involvement from a political point of view usually condemn him, while those who view it from a theological point of view (not a theologically polemical point of view) tend to justify him. The literature will be cited in the chapter on Luther.

Until the present, most people had taken Luther to be a conservative in every respect, Zimmermann began. How wrong they had been![51] In point of fact, the young Luther, especially in the period from 1517 to 1521, had had very definite revolutionary tendencies. Ostensibly quoting Luther from the year 1517, Zimmermann pointed to a passage in which Luther spoke of washing his hands in the blood of the papists.[52] Similar utterances were to be found scattered throughout most of the other writings of the young Luther.[53] Even as late as 1520, in his address to the German nobility, Luther had still manifested a revolutionary spirit. In the address he had called for the subordination of all clerical orders, even the papacy itself, to the secular government, for the eradication of all papal tithes and for the termination of the system of papal legates.[54]

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[51] This part is omitted in the second edition.

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[52] Zimmermann, Bauernkrieg (1841), I, 364, does not give the source of this quotation. It is to be found in the 1520, not the 1517, "Epitoma responsionis ad Martinum Luther per Fratrem Silvestrum de Prierio," WA, VI, 347, and is given here in full: "Mihi vero videtur, si sic pergat furer Romanistarum, nullum reliquum esse remedium quam ut Imperator, reges et principes, vi et armis accinti, aggrediantur has pestes orbis terrarum remque non iam verbis sed ferro docernant. Quid enim lallant perditi homines, etiam communi sensu privati, quam id quod Antichristus facturus praedicitur, ac si nos insensatiores quam trunci sunt habeant? Si fures furca, si latrones gladio, si haereticos igne plectimus, Cur non magis hos Magistros perditionis, hos Cardinales, hos Papas et totam Romanae Zodomae colluviem, quae Ecclesiam dei sine fine corrumpit, omnibus armis impetimus et manus nostras in sanguine istorum lavamus, tanquan a communi et omnium periculosissimo incendio nos nostrosque liberaturi? O foelices Christiano, ubi ubi fuerint, modo sub tali Romano Antichristo, sicut nos infoelicissimi, non fuerint." The misdating is not the fault of Zimmermann, but the fault of the editors of the Jena edition of Luther's works which he used. However, it would seem that since the passage is in Latin, it cannot be used, as Zimmermann used it, to demonstrate Luther's revolutionary impact upon the people. The misdating, of course, throws an altogether different light at least on the period from 1517 to 1521 of Luther's life.

[53] Zimmermann, however, fails to provide specific quotations or references. Ibid., p. 365.

By 1521, however, a change had begun to come over Luther. Already in his address to the German nobility Luther had admonished the nobles to let God destroy the power of the papacy and not to attempt the same through their own might. Strange, commented Zimmermann, to think that the Church would have given up its temporal power without being forced to do so by the temporal powers![55] Now, in 1521, Luther gave the same answer to Hutten who wanted to enlist him in his cause. Any change would have to be brought about by the Word of God and not the hand of man; the Gospel did not need to be defended by the sword.

What had occasioned the change in Luther?[56] The consciousness that his religiously oriented pronouncements had had tremendous political repercussions. Zimmermann admitted that Luther's point of departure had been 'primarily' religious and that he had not at first realized what political consequences his teaching might have,[57] although others had recognized these consequences. When Luther began to see the political consequences, especially in the actions of the common man, he tried to extricate himself from his predicament. This was a mistake as far as Zimmermann was conerned. Had Luther accepted the political consequences of his actions when he began to see them, he could have become a powerful factor in the peasants' struggle for freedom.[58] Luther, when he began to see the political consequences of his teachings appear in the plans of Hutten, and especially in the revolutionary plans of the peasants, tried to withdraw from the political arena by proclaiming that the Word of God would take care of all remedial action; man must not take the action into his own hands. Thus, while advocating a revolution in the religious realm, Luther tried to maintain the status quo in the political realm.

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[54] Ibid.

[55] Ibid.

[56] The question is Zimmermann's. It has already become questionable, however, because of Zimmermann's misdating of the Luther quotation and his failure to cite any other specific references, that any real change had taken place in Luther's position.

[57] Zimmermann, Bauernkrieg (1841), I, 346-47.

Rumors began to circulate that he had forsaken the cause of the common man and had gone over to the side of the princes; yet for some time Luther tried to remain impartial.[59] When the peasants named him to be one of the judges of the justice of their cause, Luther had occasion to admonish both prince and peasant to keep the peace and resolve their differences amicably.[60] Luther did not remain impartial very long, however; events soon led him to the right in strong support of the princes.

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[58] Ibid., III, 712.

[59] Ibid.

When the peasants disregarded his admonition to keep the peace, Luther became somewhat vexed; he was further irritated when his enemies, Karlstadt and Müntzer, placed themselves at the head of the revolutionary movement; but when Duke George of Saxony blamed the revolution, which had just broken out in Weinsberg, on him and his Reformation, Luther opened the locks on his pent-up ire and broke into wild hysteria. The pronouncements he now made smacked more of despotism than those of the despots; and, without considering that he had just sanctioned many of the demands of the peasants, he turned on them in all his fury in his Wider die räuberischen und mörderischen Rotten der Bauern, calling on the princes to "zerschmeissen, würgen und stechen, heimlich und öffentlich, wer da kann, wie man einen tollen Hund todschlagen muss." Princes who should hesitate to use force in subduing the revolting peasants were not worthy of their office and were guilty of sinning before God; but those who should die in this cause could wish for no more blessed death.[61]

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[60] Ibid.

[61] Ibid., p. 713.

When friend and foe alike attacked him for being overly severe with the poor peasants, Luther only became more stubborn in the defence of his position. Already his normal disposition was of such a nature that he could tolerate no contradiction; he became much more stubborn when he found himself with his back to the wall and bereft of his supporters. Thus, in the face of opposition he held all the more adamantly to his support of the princes and his condemnation of the peasants.[62] Writing to Dr. Rühl at the height of the storm, Luther turned aside the accusation directed against him that there might be innocent peasants among the slaughtered. God would save those who were truly innocent, he said. If God did not do so, the dying peasants must at the very least be guilty of sympathizing with the revolutionary cause, if not guilty of secret complicity. Just let the canons roar, Luther concluded, lest the peasants commit crimes a thousand times worse.[63]

Luther was caught in a predicament of his own making. He had advocated the overthrow of the temporal power of the ecclesiastical princes because he found no sanction for such power in the Bible. But the pedigree of these very princes was older and their right to rule more sanctified by time. Although the right to rule of the secular princes was likewise not sanctioned in the Bible, Luther failed to attack their prerogatives. Why then, asked the peasants and their leaders, should Luther halt halfway? Why advocate the overthrow of one and not the other when the Bible, which Luther held to be authoritative in these matters, sanctioned the right to rule of neither. Luther himself had refused obedience to both pope and emperor; why then should he try to bind the peasants all the more securely to the princely power?

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[62] In this tenacity of Luther, however, Zimmermann also saw his greatness, for without this power the Reformation would never have come about. Ibid., p. 714.

[63] Ibid.

Zimmermann explained Luther's action by pointing out that Luther had grown up in a Fürstenstaat and that this same Fürstenstaat had protected him and his Reformation while he had been under attack by both pope and emperor. The more Luther feared that his Reformation could be destroyed by revolution, the more tenaciously he clung to the protection of the princes and the more he justified their right to rule. He went so far in this direction as to say that those who advocated abolishing the servile status of the peasants were rebelling against the Word of God, for Abraham and the patriarchs had owned slaves and Paul had admonished the servants to obey their masters.[64]

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[64] Ibid., pp. 714-17. Zimmermann does not give the reference, but it would seem he is alluding to a passage in "Wider die räuberischen und mörderischen Rotten der Bauern," WA, 18, 365.

Luther's unpopular stand with regard to the Peasant War cost him the support of the masses. The people turned to Thomas Müntzer, to the Anabaptists, and away from Luther. The worst of the consequences, however, was that the princes now called upon the authoritative pronouncements of Luther to justify their despotic acts. They pursued their destructive politics, and the Germany that might have been, the Germany united politically and religiously, was not to be because Luther had refused to accept the political consequences of his religious teachings. As a result, Germany was condemned to languish under a despotic rule and to remain disunited for centuries to come.[65]

Zimmermann based his picture of Luther on the latter's own writings, but on only a slective few. In the first place, Zimmermann did not concern himself about Luther's intellectual development before 1517 at all and therefore could not really appreciate Luther's reasoning during the years of crisis, especially 1525.[66] Secondly, his concept of the young revolutionary Luther rested essentially on one passage—although he claimed to have found many similar ones—a passage attributed to the Luther of 1517 when it really belonged to the Luther of 1520. Furthermore, the passage was contained in a Latin writing and could have had little or no effect upon the German peasants. This passage, together with the others Zimmermann utilized, he misinterpreted because he could see Luther's action only in relation to his (Zimmermann's) philosophy of history, a philosophy which viewed society as moving ever nearer to its goal—freedom. Since the Peasant War was a notable effort to accelerate this progress toward freedom, Luther's condemnation of the revolutionary movement made him a reactionary, especially since Luther himself had initiated the revolution. Therefore, we cannot help but reach the conclusion that, although Zimmermann selected his facts, of which one very important one was wrongly dated, these facts were not the most important factors determining his interpretation. The most important factor was Zimmermann's philosophy of history which he imposed upon the facts he had selected to fit into his philosophy.

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[65] Zimmermann, Bauernkrieg (1841), III, 719.

[66] The staggering amount of Luther research produced since Karl Holl and the beginnings of the so-called Luther Renaissance should make it only too obvious that Zimmermann was a complete novice in the field of Luther studies.

E. Zimmermann and Müntzer

In many respects, the study Zimmermann produced was sound, and we have no intention of denying him due respect. Much of his *Bauernkrieg* rests squarely on archival research and is sound even today if one divests his story of its interpretive superstructure. Zimmermann's sections dealing with the revolt in Southern Germany, where it began and where it was mainly fought, is good because he was able to consult the archives in Stuttgart and the valuable collection of documents the Prälat von Schmidt had painstakingly gathered. This allowed him to draw a fairly accurate picture of the progress of events in Swabia, Franconia, Alsace-Lorraine, Switzerland, and Austria.[67] Nor did Zimmermann deal uncritically with these sources. Before even Ranke had pointed an accusing finger at the generally highly esteemed chronicler of the Peasant War, Gnodalius, in the Appendix of his *Reformationsgeschichte* (1847), Zimmermann had noted, already in 1843, that the story Gnadalius told could not be brought into harmony with what the documents said.[68]

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[67] Hausherr, *Zimmermann*, p. 180.

[68] *Ibid.*, p. 178. Strobel had already discredited Gnodalius on Thomas Müntzer and Zimmermann was to make extensive use of Strobel's study. See n. 74.

In marked contrast to the soundness of the history of the Peasant War in Southern Germany, however, stands his story of the revolution in the North. Here he had no access to the archives and had to make do with questionable sources. Particularly weak are his passages dealing with Thomas Müntzer.[69] Although he omitted certain passages in the second edition, was given valuable material on Müntzer and Pfeiffer collected by the Mühlhausen Archivist, Stephan,[70] and read the biography of Thomas Müntzer by J.K. Seidemann which appeared in 1842,[71] Zimmermann could not bring himself to change, in any really essential aspects, the unified whole he had made of Müntzer's thought and actions.[72] Nevertheless, this section does show the greatest differences from the 1841-1843 edition.

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[69] Hausherr states: "Anders stehen die Dinge mit dem nördlichen für uns so wichtigen Schwerpunkt der Bewegung, mit dem Sachsen-Thüringen Thomas Müntzers. Hier hat sich Zimmermann in der ersten Auflage mit kümmerlichen Quellen begnügen müssen, Quellen, die noch dazu durch den heftigen Streit zwischen der Partei Luthers und den 'Schwärmern,' zu denen sie Müntzer rechneten, gefärbt waren. So wie die ganze Bauernkriegsdarstellung Zimmermanns eine energische Umwertung der geltenden Urteile, eine mutige Rettung der besiegten Partei darstellt, so gilt dies im besonderen Masse von Müntzer und seinem Kreise, wo der Historiker dann mangels ausreichender Quellen mehr als anderswo aus seiner wissenschaftlich geschulten Einbildungskraft zu ergänzen hatte. Sein zweifellos sehr revisionsbedürftiges Müntzerbild . . . ." Ibid., p. 180. Even the Marxist, Gerhard Schilfert stated: "Daraus ergibt sich, dass Zimmermanns Forschungsergebnisse auch nach den damaligen Möglichkeiten nur für Thüringen und vor allem für die Gestalt Müntzers weniger zutrifft. Dennoch . . . ." Review of 1952 edition of Zimmermann's Bauernkrieg, ZfG, I (1953), 1, 153. Exactly how trustworthy Zimmermann's sources were and how he used them will come to light shortly.

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[70] He gratefully acknowledged Stephan's generosity in the Introduction of his second edition. Zimmermann, Bauernkrieg (1856), I, XXXVI. Otto Merx, however, did not approve of the way Zimmermann had used these documents: "Das Material, welches er [Stephans] gesammelt hatte, bekam und verwerthete W. Zimmermann in der zweiten Auflage seiner Geschichte des grossen Bauernkrieges. 2. Bd. Stuttgart 1856. Vor dem Gebrauch der betr. Abschnitte in diesem Werke ist jedoch sehr zu warnen. Denn das von Stephan gesammelte Material ist darin in sehr oberflächlicher Weise verarbeitet; ja, Zimmermann scheut sich an einzelnen Stellen nicht, die Erzählung auszuschmücken oder gar Begebenheiten und Thatsachen zu erdichten. In welch' unwissenschaftlicher Weise er gearbeitet, geht schon daraus hervor, dass er das in Förstmanns 'Neuem Urkundenbuch' abgedruckte Material nicht zur Benutzung herangezogen hat." Thomas Münzer und Heinrich Pfeiffer 1523-1525 (Göttingen, 1889), p. 5.

[71] J.K. Seidemann, Thomas Müntzer, Eine Biographie (Dresden & Leipzig, 1842).

[72] Hausherr, Zimmermann, p. 181.

As we have seen, the foundations for a reinterpretation of Müntzer had already been laid by the time Zimmermann came to write his Bauernkrieg.[73] Under the influence of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution a new appreciation of Müntzer's thoughts and actions had been kindled. Hammerdörfer had already stated that, had Müntzer been victorious, his name would be the one celebrated. Strobel had been more cautious, but he had nevertheless produced the first study of Müntzer which did not simply repeat what others had repeated since Melanchthon's Die Historia Thomä Müntzers, des Anfangers der Thüringischen Aufruhr, sehr nützlich zu lesen.[74] Nowhere, he complained, could one find even a list of Müntzer's writings, much less the writings themselves. Therefore he had tried to gather everything relating to Müntzer that had appeared in the writings of the latter's contemporaries, had added a complete list of Müntzer's own writings which he had used for his study, and had appended excerpts from the letters and most important writings of Müntzer.[75] Nor did Strobel merely paraphrase what he had found; he exercised discretion and judgment, allowing his readers to follow his reasoning as he proceeded to tell his tale.[76] Zimmermann made extensive use of this study.

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[73] See pp. 121-22.

[74] In his Introduction Strobel stated: "Bis jetzt haben fast alle, die von Müntzern geschrieben, blos der einzigen unvollständigen Nachricht sich bedient, die uns Melanchthon ertheilt hat. Sleidan und Gnodalius haben solche ohne die geringsten Zusätze von Wort zu Wort ins lateinische übersetzt ihrer Geschichte einverleibt, und diese haben nachher fast alle übrigen, die von der Reformationshistorie geschrieben haben, benutzt." Thomas Müntzer, pp. IV & V.

Upon the heels of Strobel followed von Baczko, but the tale he told was less critical. He did not discuss the nature nor the trustworthiness of the sources he used, although he made use of most of the material that was available at the time, including Strobel. It was Georg Carl Treitschke's short study of Thomas Müntzer, however, which seems to have influenced Zimmermann's interpretation of Müntzer by far the most.[77] Of all the studies on Thomas Müntzer between that of Strobel and Zimmermann, Treitschke's was undoubtedly the poorest and the most biased in favor of Müntzer. Nor did Treitschke cite many sources upon which he had based his picture of Müntzer.

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[75] Ibid., pp. V & VI.

[76] One example will have to suffice. Talking about the purported crime and execution of Müntzer's father, Strobel reasoned: "Ob dies erst im Bauernaufruhr geschehen, dem er sich, wenn er anders damals noch am Leben gewesen, vermutlich auch beygesellet haben mag, oder schon früher, vielleicht wegen einer andern, uns unbekannt gebliebenen Uebelthat, lässt sich nicht bestimmen. Vielleicht ist aber auch diese Sage ganz erdichtet, wie denn leider damals sehr gewöhnlich war, Ketzern und Gegnern allerhand nachteiliges und beschimpfendes nachzusagen. Manlius verdient auch mit seiner Compilation so wenig Glauben, als die Sammlung von Luthers Tischreden, und est ist kaum zu vermuthen, dass Melanchthon der eine Historie Müntzers geschrieben, und andere gleichzeitige Schriftsteller, diesem Umstand, wenn er wahr gewesen wäre, mit Stillschweigen übergangen haben sollten." Ibid., p. 4.

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[77] In the Introduction to the 1856 edition, Zimmermann still acclaimed Treitschke's study in these words: "Diese Bewegung hat mann sinnig das prophetische Vorbereitungswerk der neuern Weltgeschichte genannt (Treitschke). Sie ist die gewaltige Ouvertüre zu dem Schauspiele das sich auf dem Boden der neueren Zeit abspielt, und dem das Tragische nicht fehlt. Alle Erscheinungen der späteren sozialen Bewegungen in Europa liegen in der Bewegung von 1525 eingeschlossen: sie ist nicht nur der Anfang der europäischen Revolution, sondern ihr Inbegriff im Kleinen. Alle die Erscheinungen, durch welche Staaten im Laufe der folgenden Jahrhunderte verändert wurden so wie diejenigen welche in unseren Tagen eine gesellschaftliche Umgestaltung vorbereiten, finden ihre Vorbilder in der Bewegung von 1525, sowohl was Individuen als Ideen betrifft. Mit Recht nannte Treitschke den Geist Thomas Münzers einen Spiegel, der die Erscheinungen künftiger Zeiten in sich prophetisch dargestellt; mit Recht hob er hervor, das einzelne Ideen aus der Masse der Ideen, welche das Gemut Münzers erfüllt haben und die seine Zeit verlachte, später von anderen Männern aufgefasst und ausgebildet worden seien, die damit Bewunderung und Ruhm geerntet haben, wie William Penn, Spener, der Graf von Zinsendorf, J.J. Rousseau, die französischen Demagogen und die Naturphilosophen; heutzutage—wie manchen bekannten Namen hatte er nicht hinzuzusetzen?" Bauernkrieg (1856), I, XLII. Compare especially, Treitschke, Thomas Münzer, pp. 205-206 and 255.

For his own portrait of Thomas Müntzer, Zimmermann drew on the facts according to Strobel and the interpretation according to Treitschke. The progression of events is the same by Zimmermann as by Strobel, and at times whole passages not only sound similar but are identical to the punctuation mark.[78] Nor is Zimmermann always careful to give credit to Strobel; in the whole study he mentions him only twice![79] Upon these facts he then imposed the interpretation of Treitschke which fitted in nicely with his own concept of the meaning of history. Zimmermann, as we have seen, saw history progressing toward freedom as understood by the 19th-century Liberal. Within this larger framework, he saw the Peasant War as a noble effort to accelerate progress and thus aid history in reaching its goal. Revolutions had become an integral part of European history after 1525, and it was through them that the liberty which Zimmermann held so dear had been achieved, first in England, then in America, and lastly and most dramatically in France. To the extent that the history after 1525 had been a history of political and religious revolutions, it was merely an extension and a development of Müntzer's thought and action.[80]

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[78] These passages will be pointed out in the footnotes as we progress.

[79] In the second edition he is mentioned a few more times, but here the documents he collected are referred to.

[80] Zimmermann, Bauernkrieg (1856), I, XLII.

F. Müntzer's Early Development

It is important, Zimmermann stated, that one always keep in mind that Müntzer had been a young man when he stepped onto history's all too public stage. Because historians had forgotten to take this into consideration, they had distorted the true picture of Müntzer's life. According to the evidence, Zimmermann went on, Müntzer had been born in the year of our Lord 1498.[81] This would have made him twenty-seven years of age at the time of the Peasant War. How unusually precocious Müntzer had been was shown by the fact that he was made teacher at the school of Aschersleben,[82] then, at the age of fifteen (!) was teaching at Halle. It was here in Halle, at the mature age of fifteen, that Müntzer had attempted to set up his secret Bund which had as its aim the reformation of

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[81] Ibid., (1841), II, 54. Between Zimmermann's first and second edition, J.K. Seidemann's biography of Müntzer appeared which placed the latter's birthday in the year 1490—eight years earlier. See J.K. Seidemann, Thomas Müntzer, p. 1. In his second edition, Zimmermann quoted Seidemann on the date (the only time he referred to the latter's study), but went on to state, rather pathetically, that he had earlier found a reference to the year 1493 but could not remember where! Zimmermann, Bauernkrieg (1856), I, 128.

[82] Zimmermann does not give Müntzer's age, but since he was only fifteen when he came to Halle, might he not have been two to four years younger? Ibid. (1841), II, 54.

Christianity.[83] All this by 1513, some four years before Luther ever thought of nailing his ninety-five thesis to the church door in Wittenberg! And between his revolutionary activity and his teaching, Zimmermann was not very sure when, Müntzer had even been awarded a doctor's degree.[84]

Already very early in life Müntzer had turned away from Catholicism to the mystics of the Middle Ages.[85] He was especially impressed by the stories of men and women who alleged they had had heavenly visions and had communed with God. Of all these, however, said Zimmermann, it had been Joachim of Fiora who had exercised the greatest influence on Müntzer.[86] Zimmermann felt certain he could assert that Joachim's profound teachings of the coming Age of the Spirit in which men would become true brothers, in which the institutional church with its priestly hierarchy would become superfluous, and in which outside authority would be superseded by an inner authority, could not help but spark the volatile imagination of Müntzer.[87]

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[83] Zimmermann claims to rely on Müntzer's own "Bekenntnis," but the passage shows identical phrases such as "die Christenheit zu Reformieren" and the listing of those involved in the Bund as "Peter Blinte zu Aschersleben, Peter Engel, ein Kürschner, Hans Büttner und Cunz Sander zu Halle," besides containing the same information as Strobel. Zimmermann spells "Cunz" with a "K." Zimmermann, Bauernkrieg (1841), II, 54-55, and Strobel, Müntzer, pp. 5-6.

[84] Zimmermann, Bauernkrieg (1841), 54, does not cite any source. None of his predecessors knew anything of it. However, from Seidemann, Müntzer, pp. 3-4, he should have seen that Müntzer was only a Magister.

[85] Zimmermann quotes Luther, "Von der Winkelmesse und Pfaffenweihe," WA, 38, 213: ". . . er liess unwillig über seine Aufgabe, die Worte der Wandlung aus, behielt eitel Brod und Wein, und ass die Herrgötter, wie er die Oblaten nannte, ungeweiht." This is not cited by Stroble. What Luther undoubtedly meant as criticism of Müntzer, Zimmermann finds praiseworthy.

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[86] Zimmermann based the above assumption on Müntzer's own statement in his "Von dem gedichteten Glauben," which Strobel had quoted. Müntzer only stated: ". . . Ihr sollt auch wissen, dass sie diese Lehre dem Abt Joachim zuschreiben und heissen sie ein ewiges Evangelion in grossen Spott. Bei mir ist das Zeugnis Abbatis Joachim gross. Ich hab ihn allein über Jeremiam gelesen. Aber meine Lehre ist hoch droben. Ich nehme sie von ihm nicht an, sondern von Ausreden Gottes, wie ich denn zur Zeit mit aller Schrift der Biblien beweisen will." Otto H. Brandt, Thomas Müntzer, Sein Leben und seine Schriften (Jena, 1933), p. 132. Strobel was more critical on the influence of Joachim of Fiora, citing also the influence of Tauler and others. He named and quoted several witnesses, including Luther, on the influence of Joachim on Müntzer, but then also let Müntzer speak for himself, which Zimmermann did not do. Thomas Müntzer, pp. 9-11.

[87] Zimmermann, Bauernkrieg (1841), II, 55-57.

In the beginning, stated Zimmermann, Müntzer had been an ardent follower of Luther, hoping that he would reform Christianity, but by 1520 Müntzer began to turn from him because he did not go far enough.[88] Müntzer wanted a Christianity which would affect man's enviornment, he wanted an active Christianity, but Luther preached

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[88] Here follows a lengthy passage in which Zimmermann copies Strobel word for word. It is given here, together with the same passage in Strobel, as proof of Zimmermann's dependence upon Strobel.

Zimmermann:

Im Jahre 1520 wurde er als erster evangelischer Prediger nach Zwickau berufen, er war übrigens, wie manche andere, mit Luther nicht zufrieden, weil ihm diese Reformation nicht leistete, was er von ihr erwartete und forderte, nemlich eine Reform des ganzen christlichen Lebens. Und er verhehlte dieses Missvergnügen nicht. Die Gewalt des Papstes sagte er, den Ablass, das Fegfeuer, die Seelenmessen und andere Missbräuche verwerfen, wäre nur halb reformirt. Man müsse die Sache mit mehr Eifer angreifen, es sei eine völlige Absonderung von andern nöthig, es müsse eine ganz reine Kirche von lauter ächten Kindern Gottes gesammelt werden, die mit dem Geist Gottes begabt und von ihm selbst regiert werde. Luther sei ein Weichling, der dem zarten Fleisch Kissen unterlege, er erhebe den Glauben zu sehr und mache aus den Werken zu wenig, er lasse das Volk

Strobel:

In Zwickau trat er sein Lehramt im Jahre 1520 an, und hielt seine erste Predigt am Tag Mariä Himmelfahrt. Schon in dieser eiferte er sehr scharf wider das Pabstum, und zeigt sein Missfallen an verschiedenen Irrlehren desselben. Er war nicht lange hier, so liess er sichs deutlich genug merken, noch mehr aber, als er nach Altstedt kam, dass er mit der von Luthern unternommenen Reformation nicht ganz zufrieden sey, weil sie grostentheils nur das äusserliche beträfe. Die Gewalt des Pabstes, den Ablass, das Fegfeuer, die Seelenmessen und andere Missbräuche verwerfen, wäre nur halb reformiert. Man müsse diese Sache mit Eifer angrefen, es sey eine völlige Absonderung von andern nöthig, es müsse eine ganz reine Kirche von lauter ächten Kindern Gottes gesammelt werden, die mit dem Geist Gottes begabt,

sola fide and forgot to emphasize works. Luther attacked only the externalities of the Roman system and allowed the people to continue to wallow in their sins. Luther's new gospel, therefore, was more dangerous than that of the Papists.

In Zwickau, to which Müntzer was called as preacher in 1520, he came into contact with the Zwickau Prophets under the leadership of Nikolaus Storch. These prophets strongly influenced by the

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in seinen alten Sünden und diese todte Glaubenspredigt sei dem Evangelium schaedlicher, als der Papisten Lehre. *Man müsse auf den* inwendigen Christus dringen, *den Gott allen Menschen gebe, man musse nur oft an Gott denken, der noch jetzt mit den Menschen ebensowohl durch Offenbarungen handle, als vordem*. pp. 57-58.

und von ihm selbst regiert werde. *Luther sei* ein untüchtiger Reformator, *ein Weichling, der dem zarten Fleisch Kussen unterlege, er erhebe den Glauben zu sehr, und mache aus den Werken zu wenig*. *Er lasse das Volk in seinen alten Sünden, und diese todte Glaubenspredigt sey dem Evangelio schädlicher, als der Papisten Lehre*. Er aber drang auf den inwendigen Christentum, *den Gott allen Menschen gebe, man müsse sich nur* recht demüthigen, sein Fleisch kreuzigen, sich von allem äusserlichen entziehen, *und oft an Gott denken, der noch jetzt mit den Menschen eben so wohl durch Offenbarungen handle, als vor diesem* u.a.m. pp. 12-13.

Hussite ideas of nearby Bohemia, dreamed of erecting the Kingdom of God on earth. They preached the imminent destruction of the world as a result of God's judgment which would destroy all the godless and cleanse the world with their blood. Only God's elect would remain alive and inherit the Kingdom which would then be inaugurated. In this new Kingdom there would be one baptism and one faith.[89]

What did Müntzer think of these prophets?[90] Müntzer believed, said Zimmermann, that one could possess the gift of prophecy, that geniuses who preceded great events sometimes had this gift, but he did not believe in the prophetic calling of these prophets. He spoke derogatorily of them and did not consider Luther's exposition of their errors any great feat.[91] Did Müntzer believe that he himself possessed the gift of prophecy? Yes, but only in the sense in which he, Müntzer, had understood the terms 'spirit' and 'revelation,' not in the sense nearly everyone had interpreted them thus far.[92] In spite of the fact, however, that he did not believe in their prophetic mission, Müntzer did join their party and go along with their teachings. He did even more, he actively aided in developing these ideas even further because they furthered his own plans.[93]

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[89] Whereas Strobel, Müntzer, p. 13, and von Baczko, Münzer, p. 23, both state that the Zwickau Prophets denied the validity of infant baptism, Zimmermann makes no mention of this fact here but states simply that when the Kingdom of God will be inaugurated there will be one baptism. Baczko, pp. 30-31, even states that Müntzer himself took infant baptism to be the source of all evil in the Church.

[90] Zimmerman does not ask the question in the second edition. Nor does the second edition contain the following comparison of the ecstatic and prophetic visions of early Christianity with those of the Reformation. After this comparison Zimmermann goes on to say: "Eine ausserordentliche Gährung und Aufregung war auch um die ersten Reformationsjahre in der Tiefe der menschlichen Natur, das neunzehnte Jahrhundert drängt sich schon in der Ahnung jener ersten Jahre: dass ein gewisser Prophetismus in den Köpfen, in diesem oder jenem glühenden Gehirn künstlich erregt werden oder sich selbst einstellen konnte, wäre gerade nicht zu verwundern." Zimmermann, Bauernkrieg (1841), II, 60. Compare with 1856 edition, I, 133.

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[91] Zimmermann bases his argument on Müntzer's "Schutzrede," ibid., p. 61. The passage Zimmermann referred to reads as follows: ". . . Doch er [Luther] fürchtet sich im Büchlein vom Aufruhr von der Prophezeiung seines Greuels. Darum saget er auch von den neuen Propheten [Zwickau Prophets] wie die Schriftgelehrten wider Christum, Johannes VIIII. Kap. Darum hab ich fast das ganze Kapital zum gegenwärtigen Urteil benutzt. Paulus sagt von den Propheten, 1. Korinther XIIII: Ein rechter Prediger muss ja ein Prophet sein, wenn es die ganze Welt noch so spöttisch dünket. Es muss die ganze Welt prophetisch sein, soll sie anders urteilen über die falschen Propheten. Wie willst du die Leute beurteilen, so du dich im Mönchkalb über das Amt äusserst? Dass du sagest, wie du mich ins Maul geschlagen hast, redest du die Unwahrheit. Ja, du lügst in deinen Hals spiesstief, bin ich doch in sechs oder sieben Jahren nit bei dir gewesen. Hast du aber die guten Brüder zu Narren gemacht, die bei dir gewesen, dass mussfreilich an den Tag kommen, es wird sich auch anders nit reimen, du solltest die Kleinen nit verachten, Matthaei XVIII." Brandt, Leben und Schriften, p. 200. It is doubtful, to say the least, that Zimmermann's interpretation is the correct one.

G. Müntzer's Social Program

What were these plans Müntzer was trying to implement? Zimmermann was of the opinion that Muntzer was concerned about the future of 'his people,' that he felt called of God to free the common man form his burdens and his servile status, and to revenge him for these injustices.[94] Müntzer hated the oppressors of the people, both temporal and spiritual, in whom he saw the perverters of a godly world order. He hated the entire priesthood because they tyrannized the people in the name of religion,[95] and he hated the temporal rulers because they hindered the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth.[96] The more Müntzer studied the Old Testament and the mystics, the more he realized that all was not as it should be. It seemed to him the goal of Christianity to make all of life Christian, even the state and the social institutions as well as the morals of the people were to become Christian. In this way Christianity was to be realized in this world and the laws of the state become Christian laws. As there was equality before God so there should now be equality between men on earth. The more his 'inner voice' came into agreement on this point with the Old Testament and the mystics, the more Müntzer became convinced of his mission.[97]

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[92] In other words, Muntzer had understood these terms as Zimmermann did! But Zimmermann fails to spell out exactly what Müntzer meant by them.

[93] Zimmermann, Bauernkrieg (1841), 61. Concerning the relationship between Müntzer and the Zwickau Prophets, Strobel is quite explicit. He says: ". . . Diese Leute [the Prophets], zu wlechen sich auch Müntzer schlug . . . ." Müntzer, p. 13. Von Baczko spoke of the connection in the following way: ". . . es ist ungewiss, ob ihm der Zufall hier Gehülfen zuführte, oder ob er absichtlich noch hinter dem Vorhang blieb, und blos einige nach seinen Grundsätzen gestimmte Manner auftreten liess. Diese hiessen Nikolaus Storch . . . ." Müntzer, p. 22. Also: "Münzer, der sich als Storch und Stübner nach Wittenberg gingen, öffentlich für ihren Anhänger erklärte . . . ." Ibid., p. 30.

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[94] Zimmermann, Bauernkrieg (1841), II, 61.

[95] Zimmermann imputes Enlightenment motives to Müntzer when he states: "Im christlichen Priestertum sah er nur die Fortsetzung der alten Tyrannei, welche schon den ersten Volks- und Menschenfreund Jesus den Christ geschlachtet, und welche ihr Opfer zu ihrem Gott erhoben habe, und seitdem in seinem Namen die Welt tyrannisire . . . ." Ibid., p. 62.

[96] Ibid.

[97] Ibid., p. 63. The last sentence is not present in 1856 edition. Compare (1856), I, 136.

At first Müntzer still believed that the Kingdom of God could be established through the power of the spoken word, and, as a result, he turned in verbal violence against all the preachers who opposed him. In this early phase, said Zimmermann, Müntzer had even been prepared to use the princes to ensure the spread of his teachings by means of force if necessary. Once the teaching had been brought to the populace, Müntzer believed the social changes would follow automatically.[98]

But when he saw that the princes paid him no heed, Müntzer turned to the people. Already in Alstedt he had erected a secret society, his Bund, in which the members were sworn to establish the Kingdom of God on earth, the kingdom of brotherhood, freedom, and justice. Everything that hindered the realization of this kingdom—princes, priests, and the despotism of the printed word—was to be done away with, and all Christians should be invited to join the Bund in order to form a united front against the forces of opposition. Even the nobles and princes were not excluded from this invitation. Only if these should refuse to join, and in so doing signify their intention to oppose the reformation of society through the Bund, were members of the ruling class to be expelled from the land or executed. Once the Bund had gained control of the situation a form of communism was to be introduced in which work as well as property was to be shared equally. Nor was there to be any tyrant in the new kingdom, no feudal obligations, no religion bound by a servitude to the letter of Scripture, no priesthood, no class distinctions. Even church and state would be dissolved since everyone would become his own priest and his own ruler.[99]

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[98] Ibid., p. 68. Whole paragraph not in 1856 edition. Compare (1856), I, 138.

Müntzer had failed to recognize, however, that this social program could not be realized immediately. Nor, stated the 19th-century Liberal, was absolute equality a desirable goal, for it was incapable of realization. Even to achieve the possible, the abolition of the unnatural abuses and inequalities, would have taken a thousand years and not one battle as Müntzer had thought.[100] In his youthful enthusiasm Müntzer had overlooked these factors. The high hopes he had for his people, his overly active imagination, and his ambition to become the liberator of his people had brought Müntzer to the point where he himself no longer knew whether he was being motivated by forces inherent in him or whether it was not some other power, some other spirit that had come over him.[101]

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[99] Ibid., pp. 72-73.

[100] Ibid., p. 63. Deleted from 1856 edition. Compare (1856), I, 36.

Once he believed himself driven by this power outside himself, however, Müntzer had to move forward passsionately. Unlike the Old Testament prophets who had contented themselves with pointing to a better world in the future, Müntzer had felt compelled to establish this world here and now,[102] even by revolutionary means if necessary. The more he read his Moses, his Elijah, and his Jeremiah and the more he took to heart the commands of the Hebrew Jehovah to destroy the godless and avenge an angry God, the more fanatically revolutionary he became. His fanaticism, however, was a fanaticism directed toward bringing happiness to mankind,[103] and the scheme he had developed to bring about this happiness was not politically naïve. As a matter of fact, his plan had demonstrated a keen and adventurous political mind.[104]

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[101] Ibid.

[102] Ibid. Deleted from 1856 edition. Compare (1856), I, 36.

[103] Ibid., p. 64.

Zimmermann does not indicate from what sources he developed his thesis of Müntzer as the social revolutionary, but the assumption may not be without foundation that Zimmermann read his own desires, ambitions, and social aims into Müntzer's thought and action. In order to make a social revolutionary of Müntzer, Zimmermann had somehow to deny the former's religious motivation.[105] He did this by interpreting the spirit, or the 'inner voice' Müntzer spoke of, in the sense that Hegel had used the term with reference to a rational world spirit. Only in the case of Müntzer, Zimmermann used it with reference to Müntzer's own rational faculties. Clearly this is an interpretation prompted by the rational thinking of the Enlightenment. And for this interpretation Treitschke had prepared the ground.

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[104] Hammerdörfer had stated already in 1793: "Noch gefährlicher für die Idee, eine neue Kirche zu stiften, waren die Lehrsätze des schon genannten Thomas Münzers: Lehrsätze, welche nothwendig Geist- und Weltliche wider den Urheber aufbringen mussten, in denen aber, abgerechnet von der damit vermischten Schwärmerey, sehr viel gesunde Vernunft liegt. Dieser gewiss nicht unkluge Kopf hielt sich zu Allstädt in Thüringen auf . . . ." Geschichte der Reformation, p. 53.

[105] Religious is meant here in the 16th-century Reformation sense, not as used in Zimmermann's vague, deistic vocabulary.

Treitschke began the discussion of the problem of the 'inner voice' in the thought of Thomas Müntzer by saying: "Müntzer has been accused of having promised the elect that God would manifest Himself to them in an extraordinary manner by means of signs and wonders, and if God would not do so, they were to spite God into manifesting Himself. But we believe he as been unjustly accused."[106] Treitschke had found no sign of this in Müntzer's letters. All he had found here was that Müntzer had demanded that God speak to him and the other elect. The problem was to determine exactly what Müntzer had meant by this. On occasion Müntzer had stated that God the Father spoke to the Son in the heart of man or wrote in the hearts of His elect. Now, this could only mean that Müntzer was referring to that 'inner voice' in every man which could only be heard by closing out the noise of the world and relying upon one's emotions or feelings. Nor had Müntzer really believed that God manifested Himself to His elect in dreams as Melanchthon would have it, for had not Müntzer refused to follow Pfeiffer to battle despite the fact that the latter had dreamt they would be victorious? Müntzer had relied more upon his feelings than his rational faculties—which he possessed only to a lesser degree—but in most instances his emotions had led him to the right decisions.[107]

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[106] Treitschke, Münzer, p. 207.

[107] Ibid., pp. 207-208.

Thus Treitschke tried to minimize the religious moment in Müntzer's thought by emphasizing the emotional element. However, he still maintained that Müntzer had not really used his rational faculties, and, in fact, had possessed the latter only in a limited capacity. Proceeding from Treitschke's portrait of Müntzer, Zimmermann went on to add shading of his own. It was true, said Zimmermann, Müntzer had been an emotional person, but the 'inner voice' he had referred to was not his emotions; it was, much rather, man's rational faculty. Were one to look at the broad outline of the plan Müntzer had created for the future of his people, one could not help but admit the political genius of this man.[108]

Müntzer, Zimmermann continued, had fought for a spiritual conception and interpretation of the Bible; indeed, he had placed the Holy Spirit working through man's consciousness, man's rational power itself, above biblical authority. Müntzer had designated this rational faculty in man as the purest wellspring of truth.

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[108] Zimmermann, Bauernkrieg, (1841), II, 64.

Precisely this rational, yes even speculative element, came to play an even greater role in his teaching.[109]

As a result, Zimmermann thought he could give the following description of Müntzer's beliefs. Müntzer, said Zimmermann, rejected as illogical and unchristian the teaching that Christ had died for the sins of the world and had thus satisfied the demands of a righteous God. He taught that one had to find God in oneself, not somewhere afar off in the heavens. The living Word of God was not to be found in the dead letters of a book, but in the enlightened mind, and through this enlightened mind God still revealed Himself today as He had four thousand years ago. Other revelation there was none. Nor was there any devil except the wicked desires of men.

What was faith? Faith was nothing more than the actualization in man of the word of mind and Scripture, and an obedience toward God who renewed and empowered man, who planted love in the heart of man and imparted the Holy Spirit to him. Every man, even the heathen without the Bible, could possess this faith. Nature taught that one should do unto others as one would have others do unto us; to desire to do this was faith. By putting this faith into action here on earth, man created heaven here and now and became like unto God in the process. Everyone possessed the Holy Spirit, for by the Holy Spirit Müntzer meant nothing else than our rational powers.[110]

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[109] Ibid., p. 7. This and the following four paragraphs are deleted from the 1856 edition. Compare (1856), I, 138-39. In another rather lengthy passage, also deleted from the 1856 edition, where Zimmermann discussed Müntzer's Auseinandersetzung with Luther, he came back to the same idea: ". . . Müntzer, der auf die allgemeine Vernunft und den gesunden Menschenverstand, der auch dem gemeinen Manne zukam, sich berief, wollte 'das Zeugniss des Geistes nicht ausschliesslich auf die hohe Schule bringen' und nach der hergebrachten Theologie der Gelehrten beurtheilen lassen . . . ." (1841), II, 76-77. Compare (1856), I, 141.

What was more, said Zimmermann, to this confession of faith one could add the following statements of Müntzer's followers without any qualms of conscience.[111] There was no hell. Christ was not God but only a prophet and a teacher, and, like the rest of us, had been conceived in sin. The communion service was a mere act of remembrance of this Christ, and the wine and bread nothing else than wine and bread.

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[110] A careful study of these articles of faith that Zimmerman lists here show that they are taken from those Sebastian Franck listed in his Chronica. Strobel had appended these, in modernized German, to his study, Thomas Müntzer, pp. 188-94. Zimmermann again took what he wanted, changed—and sometimes drastically—the meaning, added, deleted, as it pleased him. From this comparison one can only conclude that Zimmermann very consciously and wilfully changed Müntzer into a 19th-century social revolutionary. For a comparison of the passages in question, see Appendix A. In this connection it is interesting to note that Steinmetz, in his criticism of an article by Hermann Goebke, stated: ". . . Abwegig und irriführend ist es, wenn Herr Goebke versucht . . . die 44 Artikel, die Sebastian Franck in seiner 'Chronica' anführt, wörtlich und ohne jede Kritik als exakten und gültigen Ausdruck der Lehren Müntzers nimmt und seiner Darstellung zugrunde legt . . . ." "Nachwort," Frühbürgerliche Revolution, p. 302.

[111] Zimmermann based these concluding remarks on such a reliable witness as Luther, whom, on other occasions he considered most untrustworthy. Ibid., p. 71.

But Müntzer had not always been able to say these things openly; he had had to play the role of the prophet in order to impress the people, for, said Zimmermann, a word spoken as though it came directly from heaven had quite another effect upon a crowd than a word spoken by a mere man. Müntzer believed he had need of heavenly revelations in order to make the masses believe in his calling. Therefore, he often clothed his ideas in mystical terminology no matter how rationally he thought.[112]

Thus, continued Zimmermann, Müntzer was not only far in advance of his contemporaries in political matters, but also far in advance of his contemporaries in religious thought. He was a man of thought, a fighter for the use of man's rational powers which he wanted to see applied without discrimination to every aspect of life and thought. Thus Müntzer had overcome and far surpassed the limited intellectual horizon of the Middle Ages, and in this respect had been far ahead of Luther to whom the above articles of faith remained nothing less than works of the devil.[113]

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[112] Ibid., p. 85.

In this process of transformation Müntzer became a person whose ideas, already in the words of Treitschke, had anticipated those of William Penn, Philip Jakob Spener, the Graf von Zinsendorf, Jean Jacque Rousseau, the French demagogues of the Revolution, and the philosophers of natural science.[114] The voice of God, that 'inner voice' which revealed the will of God to man had become man's emotions in the hands of Treitschke and man's rational faculty in the hands of Zimmermann.[115] Thus the process by which God revealed Himself to man became a secularized one; no longer did God reveal Himself to man in a supernatural way. God revealed only His general laws to mankind through man's rational faculty, that faculty in man which made him like God. But in order to secularize this process by which God revealed His will to man, Zimmermann had to misuse his evidence.

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[113] *Ibid*., pp. 71-72.

[114] Treitschke, *Münzer*, p. 255. We have already noted that Zimmermann had quoted exactly this passage with great approbation.

[115] Zimmermann, however, was still torn between what he recognized to be the "Schwärmer" in Müntzer and what he thought was the rationalist. "Man sieht, Müntzer ist ein Fanatiker, aber kein von hohler und überschwänglicher erfüllter Schwärmer: frisch und grün wachsen in ihm die hellsten Gedanken, praktische Wahrheiten der gesundesten Vernunft zwischen vielerlei verworrenen Ranken einer ringenden, des Ausdrucks nicht ganz mächtigen Sprache empor und über seine Zeit hinaus." *Bauernkrieg* (1841), II, 67. Deleted from 1856 edition. Compare (1856), I, 137.

The secularization of Müntzer's 'inner voice' into Zimmermann's rational faculty of necessity had to have consequences for the interpretation of Müntzer's social aims. Whereas Müntzer had wanted to rearrange society in order to make it possible for God to establish His Church, His Kingdom on earth,[116] in the hands of Zimmermann, and to a certain degree already by Treitschke,[117] the social aims of Müntzer become an end in themselves. Driven by his rational insight that the social order was not what it should be, that the equality which existed before God did not exist on earth, Müntzer had attempted to change that social order, even by revolutionary means if necessary. Müntzer's 'Kingdom of God' thus comes to mean only the ideal social structure on earth, and in the words of Zimmermann, Müntzer had even gone too far in demanding unconditional equality in this proposed social structure.

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[116] See the argumentation in my "Thomas Müntzer in Marxist Thought," CH, XXXIV (September, 1965), 319-23.

[117] Treitschke, Münzer, p. 208.

H. Müntzer and the Peasant War

Forced to leave Zwickau, Müntzer set out for Bohemia where, he believed, his ideas of a social revolution would fall on fruitful Hussite ground. Having arrived in Prag, he wasted no time in placarding the city with copies of his famous Manifesto. But the Hussite ground proved barren of revolutionary fruit and Müntzer had to set out for new terrain.

Toward the end of 1522 he was once more back in Saxony, this time in the city of Allstedt, where the people flocked to hear him preach his revolutionary message of social equality.[118] Although his plan had been perfected, yet the means by which it was to be implemented had still to be decided upon. He still thought all that was needed was the opportunity to disseminate his teachings and the social changes would come of themselves. In order to be able to spread this teaching quickly enough in face of the opposition, however, he needed the help of the princes. But when he saw that the princes did not respond to his promptings, he began to proceed without them.[119]

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[118] Zimmermann is once again following Strobel here. Compare Bauernkrieg (1841), II, 68ff., and Strobel, Müntzer, 41ff.

[119] Zimmermann, Bauernkrieg (1841), II, 71-72.

In Allstedt he established a Bund every member of which had to swear to work toward the realization of the Kingdom of God on earth.[120] With Allstedt as the center of Müntzer's revolutionary conspiratorial headquarters, messengers were now sent out to every part of Germany to win supporters for the new cause.[121] At the same time he had a number of revolutionary pamphlets printed and preached to the people whenever occasion permitted. More and more his teachings of the new kingdom won followers among the common people despite the fact that, compared with Luther, Müntzer was not a great orator.[122]

The burning of the chapel at Mallerbach not far from Allstedt by the followers of Müntzer was the first of Müntzer's outright revolutionary acts. As a result of this act, however, Müntzer was cited to appear before the Saxon princes and warned on pain of banishment to avoid inciting the populace to such acts in the future. Fearing that this would not suffice, the princes wrote to the city of Allstedt encouraging them to dismiss Müntzer. At the same time rumor had it that he would be captured and turned over to his worst enemies. Seeing that the town council would support him no longer, Müntzer decided to leave.

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[120] Ibid., p. 72.

[121] Zimermann, p. 72, bases this statement on Luther's letter to the City Council of Mühlhausen of August 21, 1524. Here Luther had stated: ". . . Auch sendt er nur landlauffer, die Gott nicht gesandt had (dann sie kuͤnnens nicht beweysen) noch durch menschen geruͦffen sind, sondern kumen von in selbst, und gehen nicht zuͤ der thuͤr kindeyn . . . ." WA, 14, 239. Luther does not say how many messengers nor whether they were sent to all parts of Germany; Zimmermann assumed this because it suited the role he had mapped out for Müntzer in the Peasant War.

[122] Ibid., p. 73.

At first he turned his steps toward Nuremberg in whose environs unrest was spreading, particularly among the peasants and the lower classes of the city. It was exactly for this reason that Müntzer had come to Nuremberg, nor did it take long before he had his followers here too. These pressed him to preach to the populace, but Müntzer, who had come to Nuremberg in order to have his "Schutzrede" against Luther printed, refused, because as he wrote a friend, he had not come to cause revolution.[123] But in spite of the fact that Müntzer had not come in order to create unrest, when the city council became aware of his presence, his printed works were confiscated and he himself expelled from the city.

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[123] Ibid., pp. 80-81. It is interesting to note that Zimmermann tries to demonstrate that Müntzer went to Nuremberg precisely because this was a center of unrest. Yet he had no intention of creating unrest; the letter, however, is quoted without comment. Compare with the much more considered report by Strobel, Müntzer, pp. 64-68.

From Nuremberg Müntzer found his way penniless to Swabia which region was also already in a state of unrest. Historians, said Zimmermann, had wrongly connected this unrest in upper Germany with Müntzer's personal influence; this could not be, for while Müntzer was yet in Northern Germany the unrest had begun. It was obvious, though, that this unrest had been kindled by the followers of Müntzer—the Anabaptists—who had preceded the former to this region.[124] For several weeks he remained in the region of the Klettgau, in the village of Griessen, from where he made daily forays into the countryside to preach revolution against the ruling classes.[125] The peasant leaders, in the early stages of revolting, begged him to stay, but this did not fit into his plan for he had come here only in order to see that the revolution was well under way. He left behind, however, an ever increasing number of Anabaptist followers to carry on his work.[126]

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[124] *Ibid.*, pp. 83-84. We shall come to speak on the question of the connection between Müntzer and the Anabaptists later on in this study. Here we want only to note that the thesis, which made the Anabaptist followers of Müntzer, fitted very nicely into the role Zimmermann had determined for Müntzer in the Peasant War. These, obviously, were Müntzer's secret agents sent out from the conspiratorial headquarters—where? Allstedt? Müntzer had just been driven from there or left on his own. He had come to Nuremberg alone or in the company of Pfeiffer and had proceeded from there to Swabia alone. Nor had he as yet set up headquarters in Mühlhausen. But these were minor details that did not need to impede the tale Zimmermann intended to tell.

But not only in this region of Southern Germany was Müntzer's influence felt, an influence that reached into Basel and Zürich in Switzerland; it was felt also in all of Southern Germany and especially in the Allgau, down the Donau, and in Württemberg. Men like Franz Rebmann, preacher in Griessen, Schappeler, preacher in Memmingen, Geuglin von Lindau from Sernatingen, Florian of Eichstetten, Jakob Wehe of Leipheim, Doktor Mantel of Stuttgart, and others all worked toward the same goal as Müntzer.[127] As a matter of fact, continued Zimmermann emphatically, the whole movement with its hundreds of itinerant preacher messengers found the core of their teaching in the teaching of Müntzer, and these preachers were to be found in Franconia, especially in the environs of Rottenburg, toward the end of 1524.[128] They were also to be found toward the end of 1524 and the early part of 1525 in Tyrol.[129] But the real center of Müntzer's revolutionary activity was to be Mühlhausen. From here it was that he threw his firebrands into Hessen, into Saxony, and farther into the Netherlands, which set Germany aflame.[130] Thus were Müntzer's revolutionary teachings spread abroad, not only in Germany, partly by himself and his Anabaptist followers and partly by those who were of one mind with him and stood under his influence.

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[125] Ibid., p. 86. In his "Bekenntnis" Müntzer stated only: "Im Klettgau und Hegau bei Basel habe er etliche Artikel wie man herrschen soll, aus dem Evangelio angegeben, daraus fürder andere Artikel gemacht . . . ." Brandt, Leben und Schriften, p. 80. "Da habe er denn gepredigt, dass daselbst ungläubige Regenten, auch ungeläubig Volk wäre, dass daselbst ein Rechtfertigung geschehen müsse."

[126] Ibid., pp. 86-87.

[127] Ibid., p. 96. Zimmermann does not state explicitly that these were all followers of Müntzer, but he implies as much. Not in the 1856 edition. He strengthens this impression by continuing a little later: "Wie viele Männer, deren Namen man nicht kennt, oder die sich erst im Taufe des Krieges nahmhaft machen, mögen in der Richtung gewaltsamer Bewegung neben den angeführten gearbeitet haben! . . . ," p. 97. Also not in 1856 edition. Compare (1856), I, 184.

With this extraordinary influence of Thomas Müntzer upon the Peasant War in Germany, it had to follow that the articles, the famous Twelve Articles, had been formulated by him as well. This Zimmermann now proceeded to prove. Proceeding from Müntzer's confession in which the latter had stated: "In the region of the Klettgau and the Hegau near Basel I set up a few articles out of the

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[128] Ibid., p. 228.

[129] Ibid. (1841), II, 423.

[130] Ibid., p. 606. Not in 1856 edition. Compare (1856), II, 82.

Bible on how to rule, from which further articles were made,"[131] Zimmermann asked the question whether the articles of Alsace could be those formulated by Müntzer. They differed from the Twelve Articles in that they were more severe and shorter. They also had great similarity to those circulated in Austria. Could they be the ones Müntzer had drawn up in Southern Germany?[132]

The Twelve Articles in their final form, however, could not have been written by Müntzer for their tone was far too mild.[133] Nevertheless, his best informed contemporaries after the war continually persisted in fixing the final blame on Müntzer. It is true, said Zimmermann, that the first, second, third, fourth, fifth, and eighth articles contain ideas fundamental in the thought of Müntzer,[134] and that the inscription on one original copy contained a motto reminiscent of the Millenium Müntzer had promised, but the spirit and the language of the Twelve Articles are not those of Müntzer. On the other hand, Müntzer could at times accommodate himself and his language to suit all occasions. It was quite possible, argued Zimmermann, that when Müntzer realized that the peasant in South Germany did not desire a radical equality, did not desire revolution but rather desired only greater freedom and the abolition of abuses, he may well have drawn up a set of articles not at all as radical as he might otherwise have just in order to keep the peasants in arms here. These could well have provided the foundation upon which the Twelve Articles were later built.[135] Thus it is possible, said Zimmermann, that the final draft of the Twelve Articles did not come from Müntzer's pen, but that his articles were used upon which to found them. However, if the Twelve

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[131] "Im Klettgau und Hegau bei Basel habe er etliche Artikel, wie man herrschen soll, aus dem Evangelio angegeben, daraus fürder andere Artikel gemacht . . . ." Brandt, Leben und Schriften, p. 80. Whether Müntzer preached these only, or whether they were written down remains in doubt. From the German original, however, it would seem that from the basic articles Müntzer had formulated on how to rule, he derived others. The exact nature or number of these articles is nowhere stated.

[132] Zimmermann, Bauernkrieg (1841), II, 606.

[133] Ibid., p. 108.

[134] Ibid., p. 109. The last sentence is not in the 1856 edition. Compare (1856), I, 320.

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[135] *Ibid.*, p. 110. This whole section is not in the 1856 edition. Compare (1856), I, 320-21. Günther Franz comes to the following conclusion as to Müntzer's authorship of the Twelve Articles: ". . . Nicht anders ist auch das Zeugnis Thomas Müntzer's zu werten, der in seinem 'Bekenntnis' von den 12 Artikeln der Schwarzwälder Bauern spricht. Da Müntzer selbst Ende 1524 in Oberdeutschland geweilt hat und auch weiterhin Verbindungen zu den Klettgauer Bauern gehabt zu haben scheint, könnte man meinen, dass er um die Entstehung der Artikel Bescheid gewusst hat. Doch die Satzstellung macht deutlich, dass Müntzer hier nur die Antwort von dem befragenden Richter in den Mund gelegt worden ist. Er hat vermutlich die Frage des Richters nur bejaht. Nicht von ihm, sondern von seinem Richter stammt das Wort. Der Richter hat anscheinend gefragt: Waren es die 12 Artikel der Schwarzwälder Bauern? und Müntzer hat geantwortet: zum Teil und andere. Damit erklärt sich auch am zwangslosesten das sonst unverständliche 'zum Teil.'" "Die Entstehung der 'Zwölf Artikel' der deutschen Bauernschaft," *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*, XXXVI (1939), 197. (Hereafter this journal will be cited as *ARG*.) Sartorius, *Bauernkrieg*, pp. 112-14, opted for Schappeler instead of Müntzer because he believed that, ". . . es scheint so ganz die unterdrückte Unschuld daraus zu rden, dass man den Verfasser weit mehr Mässigung und Klugheit zuschreiben muss, als Müntzer je bezeigt hat . . . ," p. 114. Strobel, *Müntzer*, pp. 71-72, did not know who had written the articles: "Mit völliger Gewissheit lässt sich bis ietzt der Verfasser dieser Artickel noch nicht bestimmen . . . ," p. 72. But he tended to incline toward Schappeler. Nor did Streif, *Münzer*, pp. 70-71, believe that Müntzer had drawn up the Twelve Articles. "Wiewohl nun diese Artikel (12) der schwäbischen und fränkischen Bauern gar nicht im Geiste Münzer's und seinen Genossen zu Mühlhausen abgefasst waren, indem ihr Gehalt viel zu nüchtern und vernünftig war; wurden sie doch mit Freuden aufgenommen . . . ."

Articles were not directly from his pen, the so-called Artikelbrief certainly was because it was much more radical.[136]

It was in Mühlhausen, Saxony, however, that Müntzer's greatest moment came. Ever since he had failed in Nuremberg,[137] Mühlhausen, a city where he had supporters who had already begged him to come before, seemed to him to be that focal point from which he could arouse all of Thuringia and Saxony.[138] With his expulsion from Allstedt, Müntzer had tried to settle in Mühlhausen, but the city council fearing trouble had not allowed him to enter and at the same time had expelled his trusted friend and ally, Heinrich Pfeiffer, who, together with others, were preparing to join forces with Müntzer. By the time Müntzer returned, however, Pfeiffer and his friends were back in the city and only too eager to welcome the former.

Müntzer's entry in Mühlhausen early in 1525 signified the end of the rule of the city council. Müntzer was immediately elected first preacher of the city and by morning many of the honorable citizens of the city had made good their secret departure. With a few bold strokes Müntzer and his cohorts gained control of the city council, deposed the government, and set up their own 'eternal council' with Müntzer as head of this council.[139]

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[136] Ibid., p. 115. "Zu Nürnberg wurde diese Flugschrift gedruckt, und ungeachtet der Titel sie 'von oberländischen Mitbrüdern guter Meinung' ausgehen lässt, darf man sie ohne Bedenken Münzer jedenfalls dem Münzerischen Kreise zuweisen . . . ." The section in brackets is not in 1856 edition. Compare (1856), I, 323.

[137] Zimmermann himself quoted the letter in which Müntzer had disclaimed any attempts to arouse revolution in Nuremberg. See p. 180.

[138] Ibid., p. 606. Not in 1856 edition. Compare (1856), II, 211.

With Müntzer in control of the city, reforms were slowly introduced which were to be the beginning of the realization of Müntzer's social program. He tried to introduce a kind of communism, but only to the extent it had been practised in the time of the apostles, giving to those who needed by taking from those who had a surplus. He himself saw to it that justice was dealt out equally to all, and every one respected him. He must have been an imposing personality, said Zimmermann.[140]

Soon enough Müntzer's presence in Mühlhausen aroused unrest in the surrounding countryside and far afield. Already in April Luther set out to try to quiet the unrest through the power of his personality. But lo, the mighty Luther's voice turned out to be but the twitting of a bird in the rumble of an oncoming storm. While he was yet underway, the storm broke into his very birthplace—Eisleben.

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[139] Ibid., pp. 607-609. This is not in second edition, for here he could use the material Stephan had given him. Yet, as Merx pointed out, even this material was used in a questionable manner by Zimmermann. See n. 63, p. 147. Compare (1856), II, 211.

[140] Ibid., pp. 610-11. In the following passages Zimmermann is at pains to reëstablish Müntzer's moral character as well; lies all lies and slanders which had been heaped on Müntzer by his enemies—even after his death. This was merely a sign of how much these enemies had feared him, p. 612.

Müntzer now began to work like a man possessed. He turned the Johanniterkloster into a veritable munitions factory, organized raiding forays into the surrounding countryside, and sent his emissaries to all parts of the surrounding territories and cities to win the populace to their cause. These emissaries, under the guise of simple workmen, secretly spread Müntzer's teachings among the people. At the same time he was in touch with the leaders of events in Southern Germany to see how the revolt was progressing there and trying to coördinate all revolutionary efforts.[141]

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[141] *Ibid.*, pp. 630-33. He bases his statement concerning Müntzer's contact with the southern revolution on Bullinger's statement in his *Der Widertaufferen Ursprung, fortgang, etc*. (Zurich, 1561), which reads as follows: ". . . / sunder sich widerum herab in Thüringen gethon / und zu Mülhusen wonet / schreib er doch brieff sinen vertruwten haͤruf / mit denen er ymerder unreuͤwige lut anzundt unnd hatzt wider jre herren und oberen. Und nit unlang vor dem ufbruch der pürischen ufruͦu / der in der Landgraffschaft und darumb sich erhub / schickt er einen botten heruf mit brieffen / unnd ouch mit zaͤdlen / in welche er hatt lassen verzeichnen die kreiss und grosse der kuglen des geschuͤtzes / das zu Mülhusen zuͦ der ufrur schon gegossen was: starckt damit unnd trost die unruͤwigen . . . ," p. 2.

But Zimmermann, with the hindsight given to most historians, knew that he must prepare his readers for the decline and fall of his hero. He began by informing them that the Thuringians were not Swabians who had grown up with gun in hand, or for that matter, Franconians led by a Florian Geyer, or yet sharpshooters who had grown up in the Alps. They were accustomed to using little else than hoe and spade. Despite the fact that Müntzer knew all this, he did not despair of victory.[142] As though this were not enough, in the most crucial moment his friend and most trusted confidant, Pfeiffer, became his evil genius. Müntzer was waiting for just the right moment, but Pfeiffer forced him into playing his hand too early, before they were strong enough and before enough peasants had been roused to revolt. In order not to lose his influence, Müntzer was forced to move out with his forces as well.[143]

What more needs to be said? Only that when it came to the decisive battles in Saxony the North Franconians, who had allied themselves to Müntzer's party, failed to keep faith. It was the old German problem of disunity, sighed Zimmermann, everyone only thought in regional terms.[144] What was worse was that when the surrounding regions called for help, Müntzer and Pfeiffer could raise only three hundred men in Mühlhausen and its environs to go to their rescue.

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[142] Zimmermann, Bauernkrieg (1841), II, 766-67.

[143] Ibid., p. 767.

[144] Ibid., pp. 770-71.

Yet in spite of these handicaps, Müntzer somehow managed to gather enough of a motley crew to meet the forces of the princes at Frankenhausen. The story is too well known to be repeated here. Müntzer held his encouraging speech, but not in the words Melanchthon had clothed it.[145] It had its usual effect. In due course the rainbow appeared, and since the peasants carried the rainbow as a symbol in their flags, they were heartened and began singing, "Komm heiliger Geist, Herre Gott." While they sang and the truce was not yet ended, the treacherous princely canons began to join in the chorus. Surrounded by princely treachery on the one hand and peasant incompetence on the other, Müntzer and his men were doomed to defeat.

Somehow Müntzer managed to escape the melee that followed only to be discovered in Frankenhausen playing the role of a sick man in bed. Alas for Müntzer, he acted well but left some identifiable artifacts lying about. These were discovered, his identity revealed, and he himself led captive to his enemies.

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[145] Already Strobel had said: ". . . Sie [the speech] in Melanchthons Hist. Th. Müntzers, und nicht dieser, sondern Melanchthon ist ganz sicher der Verfasser, wie von der folgenden Anrede des Landgrafen Philipps." Strobel, Müntzer, p. 88.

What about his end? Had he died well as befitted a hero? Indeed he had! When led to his captors, he had staunchly defended his action and criticized the princes to their very faces. Faced by the sanctimonious Philip of Hessen who, Bible in hand, tried to convince him of his errors, Müntzer disdained to answer. Under cruel torture his tormentors forced a confession from his lips, but the confession was in reality no confession at all.[146] His last letter to the city of Mühlhausen showed him resigned to his fate as only a great personality could be, content that he had done his best. And yet the lie had been carried in all directions that Müntzer had recanted and had returned to the sanctity of the Roman Church.[147]

The real tragedy of Müntzer, however, lay in the fact that the common man, whose welfare Müntzer had at heart and for whom all his plans had been laid, betrayed him. As he had been ahead of his time in religious and political ideas, so had he also outstripped by far the populace in his audacity and revolutionary courage. He had thought that the same revolutionary courage would be manifested by the oppressed people, but they had not yet reached that point. The selfishness and provincialmindedness which the latter had demonstrated during the revolt revealed to him that he had misplaced his confidence. Neither the time nor the people had been ripe for his advanced ideas of social equality.

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[146] Zimmermann stated: ". . . und sie entrissen ihm Bekenntnisse, doch nur karge, kaum einen abgerissenen Theil seines Werkes und seiner Verbindungen, er nannte Namen seiner Bundesgenossen zu Altstett, Mansfeld, Mühlausen, Aschersleben, Wimmelburg, Wolferide und an andern Orten." Bauernkrieg (1841), II, 782. However, if Zimmermann were proven to be wrong in his assumption of Müntzer's far flung connections, as seems to be the case, Müntzer's confession may well have been quite a substantial one.

[147] Zimmermann points specifically to Dr. Rühel's letter to Luther of May 21, 1525. Ibid., 783.

Zimmermann was very much aware that he had given a revolutionary revaluation of Thomas Müntzer despite the beginnings toward a more positive assessment begun by Hammerdörfer and continued by Strobel and Treitschke.[148] But the question which faces us at this juncture of our study is not whether Zimmermann was aware that he had given a revolutionary reappraisal of Müntzer, but whether this revolutionary reappraisal was firmly founded on the facts.

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[148] Zimmermann stated: ". . . Noch muss der Geschichtsschreiber einen heftigen Widerspruch von Vielen fürchten, wenn er auf Thomas Münzers Grab die Krone des Märtyrers heftet. Und doch, wie nach der Christuslehre das Weltgericht Gottes, wiegt die Geschichte nicht bloss das Gewordene und Vollbrachte, sondern auch das Denken und Gedachte, das Wollen und Gewollte. Und est ist ein eigenes Geschick: unter den Disteln und Dornen, womit die Verläumdung sein Grab überflocht, sind derselben auch grosse frische Lorbeerblätter entfallen, diese sammelt die Geschichte und flicht sie zum Kranz." Ibid., p. 791.

Exactly how revolutionary Zimmermann's reappraisal of Müntzer was, is shown by the fact that not one of the former's predecessors, from Hammerdörfer to Bensen—not even Treitschke, saw Müntzer in the role of leader of the entire Peasant War.[149] At most, Müntzer had been the leader of the revolt in Thuringia, and the revolt in Thuringia had differed from the revolt in the rest of Germany precisely because Müntzer had been its leader—it had demonstrated greater fanaticism and poorer organization.

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[149] The problem of Müntzer's involvement in the Peasant War had been variously appraised by Zimmermann's predecessors. Hammerdörfer, Reformationsgeschichte, p. 57, stated: "Während dies in Franken und Schwaben vorgieng, fieng es auch an in Thüringen ziemlich unruhig zu werden. Man giebt lutherischer Seits die erste Schuld dieser Empörung Münzern, so wie die Ursache der ganzen Unruhe von den Katholiken Luthern beygelegt wird, weil alle Partheyen sich ganz von aller gegebnen Veranlassung frey machen wollten . . . ." Hammerdörfer, therefore, would at the most, see Müntzer as the leader in Thüringia. Sartorius, Bauernkrieg, p. 312, stated: ". . . Dass Münzer selbst in Schwaben früher gewesen, und an den Gränzen der Schweiz gepredigt habe, ist ausser Zweifel, und er selbst hat es in seinem peinlichen Verhör nachher gestanden; dass er aber der Urheber jener Empörungen im südlichen Deutschland war, dass er besonders dazu mitgewirkt, ist ganz falsch; er scheint nicht einmal in einer genauen Verbindung mit den Anführern gestanden, noch nach einem Plan mit ihnen gehandelt zu haben . . . ." Strobel, Müntzer, pp. 68-72, did not commit himself as to Müntzer's influence, but it seems he believed the former must have had some influence in the south, for he said: "Diese eben ietzt angeführte Worte und sein Aufenthalt in Schwaben, wo der Aufruhr der Bauern zuerst ausbrach, gaben Veranlassung, dass ihm einige die zwölf Artickel der Bauern zuschriben . . . ," p. 71. Von Baczko, Münzer, p. 40, also felt that, despite Müntzer's activity in the south, he had not really influenced the revolt there. "Er hatte die Denkungsart des grossen Haufens auf seinen Zügen hinreichend kennen gelernt; schon während seines Aufenthalts in der Schweiz, waren Empörungen in Schwaben ausgebrochen, und er würde vielleicht jetzt thätigen Antheil daran genommen haben, wenn er nicht den Ruf als Prediger nach Mühlhausen erhalten . . . ." Even Treitschke, Münzer, p. 228, stated: ". . . Aber obgleich die dortigen Theologen, Ökolampadius und Hugefeld, an seiner Lehre Gefallen fanden, und ihn selbst zum Predigen ermahnten, so ward ihm doch das Geschäft, dem rasenden Pöbel das Evangelium zu predigen,

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bald verleidet. Diese Menschen hassten ihre Herren nicht, wie Münzer, als Feinde des Glaubens, sondern als Beeinträchtiger ihrer Freyheit und ihres Eigenthmus . . . Gleichwohl hörten die Bauern Münzers feurige Predigten gern, und lagen ihm an, bey ihnen zu bleiben, aber er verschmähete dieses, und eilte zurück nach Mühlhausen, wo er sein Lehren und sein Werben zu dem Bündniss für das Evangelium eifriger und mit besserm Erfolg als je trieb." Streif, *Münzer*, p. 45, also felt Müntzer had had little, if any, influence in the South. "Nach dem vielbewegten Süd-Deutschland flüchtete der Vertriebene, dort für seinen unruhigen Geist und seine unglücksschwangern Pläne einen günstigern Boden und grössern Wirkungskreis suchend. Er war in Basel, sprach bei Öekolampadius ein, predigte unter den aufrührerischen Bauern des Clegau's und Schwarzwaldes, als er aber auch dort seine Rechnung nicht stand, begab er sich nach Nürnberg . . . ." Streif has the wrong sequence of events here. Of the same opinion was Heinrich Wilhelm Bensen, *Geschichte des Bauernkrieges in Ostfranken aus den Quellen bearbeitet* (Erlangen, 1840), p. 2: "Der Zeit nach hatte der Bauernkrieg früher an der Schweizergränze in Südschwaben begonnen; seine politische Bedeuting gewann er erst in Ostfranken. Die Zertrümmerung des Landes in viele Gebiete, die bäuerlichen Verhältnisse halfen dazu, noch mehr der eigentliche Volkssinn und die Erinnerung an die alte fränkische Freiheit. Die Häupter des Aufstands sind hier keine Fanatiker, sondern kaltentschlossene Reformer, welche ihre Sache mit dem Schwert durchzuführen gedenken, lieber eine Burg brechen als Psalmen singen und—ganz verschieden von dem thüringischen Münzer—auf gutes Geschütz mehr halten als auf lange Predigten . . . ."

In the beginning of this section on Müntzer we noted that Zimmermann was in all probability nearly solely dependent upon Strobel for his factual evidence. This is proven by the rather lengthy passage we quoted from Zimmermann which was taken word for word directly from Strobel. Not only this very obvious passage, but other expressions, quotations Strobel had given, and other information were taken from Strobel. This would not have aroused our mistrust so much if Zimmermann had openly acknowledged from which source he drew his information. But this he failed to do. Yet this was not the greatest crime he committed against Strobel. The latter had taken great pains to collect all the material available on Müntzer, be this conflicting or not. Once he had collected the material, he tried to reason, in the presence of his readers, toward a rational solution. It is here that Zimmermann misused the material collected by Strobel, for he took what he wanted, what suited his purpose, and left the rest. How he used Strobel's material was seen when we compared the former's interpretation of Müntzer's beliefs with the Franck original printed in Strobel's Appendix. Words and phrases were left out which significantly changed the meaning Franck had intended, and in other instances whole passages were changed into something drastically different from the original.[150]

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[150] See Appendix A.

In the second place, we have noted that Zimmermann read his own political and religious ideas into those of his hero, Thomas Müntzer. He did this by equating Müntzer's religious 'inner voice' with the 18th- and 19th-century 'rational faculty' of man. In so doing, Zimmermann made of Müntzer a social revolutionary and a man far in advance of his own time and contemporaries.

Yet Zimmermann's conscience must have been somewhat uneasy, for in the second edition those very parts were omitted which tended to remake Müntzer into a 19th-century social revolutionary.[151] A careful study of the passages omitted in the second edition shows that these passages refer precisely to the rational and the social aspect of Müntzer's teachings. The disillusioned revolutionary of 1848 realized he had gone too far and had read too many of his own aims and ambitions into those of Müntzer. On the other hand, however, he was not willing to give up the basic outline he had established in the first edition.

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[151] Max Steinmetz, who has made a comparison of the two editions but has as yet not made public his findings, stated in a footnote: "Ein Vergleich der beiden Ausgaben, den ich angestellt habe, führte zu erstaunlichen Ergebnissen, über die ich zu gegebener Zeit berichten werde. Die Literatur geht hierauf kaum ein . . . ." "Probleme der frühgürgerlichen Revolution," Frühbürgerliche Revolution, p. 28, note 22.

Thirdly, Zimmermann made of Müntzer the great revolutionary hero of the whole Peasant War on the weakest evidence and in the face of a host of opinions to the contrary. From Luther's letter to the city council of Mühlhausen he had gleaned the vital information that Müntzer had sent his emissaries into all parts of Germany although Luther had not said that much and was evidently trying to place the blame for the entire revolt on Müntzer's shoulders. Whereas Zimmermann would not believe the word of Luther with regard to Müntzer on other occasions, yet here he made more of it than Luther himself had intended, without indicating on what grounds he chose to do so. By making the Anabaptists Müntzer's disciples,[152] Zimmermann discovered the emissaries Luther had referred to, and by discovering Anabaptist agitators in all pasts of Germany before, as well as during the revolt, Zimmermann saw Müntzer's teachings spread far and wide, even to those places to which Müntzer himself never came. And, finally, by quoting Bullinger, who had stated that Müntzer had sent messengers to Southern Germany with letters, he surmised that Müntzer had been in continual contact with the leaders of the revolt in that region in order to coördinate the revolutionary efforts. It was a magnificent picture, but it hung on thin strands of evidence.

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[152] The connection between Müntzer and the Anabaptists will be subjected to closer scrutiny in the following section of this chapter.

But Müntzer had been even more: he had been the framer of the original peasant articles which had later been developed into the famous Twelve Articles. He was the leader of the Thuringian revolt and the tragic hero of a misguided trust in a selfish people. Indeed, Müntzer had been a man born out of due season and under an unpropitious constellation of the stars. He had been born long before his time, and the world into which he had been born had not been ripe for his ideas. Therefore he had failed,but failed in a grand manner and in a great cause.

I. Zimmermann and the Anabaptists

We have already seen that Zimmermann believed the Anabaptists had been Müntzer's secret agents, spreading his teachings throughout Germany. But where had these Anabaptists originated, what were their teachings, and in what relationship did they stand to Thomas Müntzer?

Zimmermann accepted the time-worn theory that Anabaptism had originated in Zwickau,[153] but he did not care to admit that Müntzer had been a follower of the Zwickau Prophets and a number of their sect. Earlier in this chapter we noted how Zimmermann tried to establish that Müntzer had not been influenced by the Prophets, but had rather made use of them to further his own plans, in spite of the fact that both Strobel and von Baczko had laid stress on this connection. From Strobel Zimmermann also knew that Müntzer had rejected infant baptism and had blamed the corruption of the Church on precisely this practice.[154] On what evidence, then, did Zimmermann believe that Müntzer had not been a disciple of the Zwickau Prophets?

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[153] Zimmermann, Bauernkrieg (1841), II, 83, does not cite a source for his assumption that Anabaptism originated in Zwickau. It is very likely that he simply took it for granted, for the theory was paraded as an established fact in nearly every book on Anabaptism until Heberle's "Die Anfänge des Anabaptismus in der Schweiz," Jahrbuch für deutsche Theologie (1858), p. 258, some two years after Zimmermann's second edition. Thus, for example, it could be found in Johann Henrico Ottio, Annales Anabaptistici hoc est, historia universalis de Anabaptistarum origine, progressu, factionibus, etc. (Basel, 1672), pp. 1-36, which he cited on occasion. But more than likely he took it from Bullinger whom he cited more often and whom Strobel had quoted as authoritative on Müntzer's stay in Southern Germany, Müntzer, p. 70. In his Der Widertoufferen Ursprung, Fürgang, Secten, etc. (Zurich, 1561), p. 1, Bullinger wrote: "Umb das jar Christi ungefahrlich 1521. and 1522. habed sich daunden an der Sal in Saxon erhebt etliche unruͤwige geister (under welchen ein furnemmer was Niclaus Storck) welche troumtend / unnd als durch gesichter und offenbarunge / von Gott (wie für gabend) aus dem himel jnen anzeigt / für wahrhafftig fürtrugend / doch anfangs heimlich jres glychen unruͤwigen lüten / es muͤsste ein andere neuͤve waͤlt werden / in deren wonte die gerechtigkeit / darumb muͤsstend zu vor aufgerütet werden alle gottlosen ab der erden / sampt allen gottlosen fürsten und herren: und nantend aber alle die gottloss / die jrer part nit warend. Und aus der selbe schuͦl und rott har / is komen und aufgestande Thomas Müntzer / welcher ouch sine jünger hatt / Melchiorn Ringgen / und andere vil mer . . . ."

We noted that Zimmermann thought Müntzer had belittled the Prophets in his "Schutzrede." We also noted that Zimmermann believed Müntzer had an altogether different conception of the terms 'spirit' and 'revelation' than was current at the time. The fact that Müntzer used the terminology of the mystics in which to clothe his ideas only meant that he made use of these beliefs in order to exalt and secure his position with the common man. But Zimmermann had more convincing proof.

Historians had mistakenly taken Müntzer for an Anabaptist, to say nothing of his being their originator. According to the express declaration of one of the most trustworthy and best informed witnesses of the time, Sebastian Franck, Müntzer had not been an Anabaptist, nor had he ever rebaptized. Neither had his secret disciples, of whom there were many even after his death, been

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[154] Strobel quoted parts of Müntzer's "Protestation" in which the latter came to speak exactly on the problem of baptism. Müntzer, p. 198.

Anabaptists.[155] Yet Zimmermann had accepted the Anabaptists as Müntzer's messengers on Bullinger's evidence. But Bullinger had also very expressly stated that Müntzer was the father of Anabaptism.[156] Thus Zimmermann was torn between the evidence of two witnesses, both of whom he accepted as reliable on occasion.

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[155] The passage in Sebastian Franck reads as follows: ". . . Er sol noch ein grossen anhang heimlicher Jünger in Thüringen haben / die sind nicht Täuffer / hat auch selbst nicht wider taufft / wie ich glaubwirdig bericht bin / villeicht zu fruh gestorben . . . ." Chronica, p. CLX. But from Franck he should also have noted that the latter had also stated that, "Anno tausent fünff hundert und zwentzig / gleich in und nach der Auffrur der Bauwren / entstund auss dem Buchstaben der Schrift ein neuve Sect un sondere Kirch / die nennten etlich Widertäuffer / etlich Täuffer die fiengen an mit eim sondern Tauff sich von den andern zu sondern / und alle andere Gemein als unchristlich zu verachten . . . ," p. CLXIIII.

[156] Zimmermann, Bauernkrieg (1841), II, 82, cited Bullinger as evidence that Müntzer had been in Basel, Zürich, and Griessen in Southern Germany for some time. In the next sentences, however, Bullinger continued: ". . . unnd sinen gifftigen samen / der bald hienachvolgender pürischer ufruͦr in die unruͤwige ufruͤrigen hertzen pflantzet. Domals spreitet er ouch uss die leer von dem Wiedertouff / von dem wort Gottes / wie ichs hieuroz kurz erzelt hab . . . ." Der Widertoͤufferen Ursprung, p. 2. This was more explicitly stated in Bullinger's Reformationsgeschichte (Frauenfeld, 1838), which Zimmermann also cited at times. Here Bullinger had said: "Von anfang der Toͤufferey und Toͤufferen hab ich wytloͤuffig geschriben in meinem ersten getruckten Buch wider Toͤufferey. Dorum ich hie nu kurtze verzeichnis thun wil. Daniden in Saxon, an der Saal, entstundet etlich unruͤwige geister imm Jar Christi 1521 und 1522. Under welchen die fuͤrmmen warend, Nicklass Storck, der pfyffer, Melchior Ringg, und Thomas Müntzer. Da aber hieuor in dieser history gemeldet, wie sich Müntzer, hie offhin in dise Landts art gethan, und dazu imm Grebel, Mantz und andere unruͤwige geister kummen, und den widertouff, usz dem Müntzer gesogen haben. Den habend sy ouch Zürich angehept zu tryben und leeren," p. 237.

It is typical of Zimmermann's study that he does not allow his readers into these problems. We have seen that, even where he followed Strobel, he chose from him what he wanted without saying why. In this instance he did exactly the same thing: he borrowed from Bullinger and from Franck what he wanted, but failed to state that they were in outright contradiction to one another on the decisive issue.

Zimmermann solved the problem in the following manner. He had already established to his own satisfaction that Müntzer had made use of the Zwickau Prophets for his own revolutionary purposes. He now went on to state that Müntzer had united the vast majority of the Anabaptists under his leadership despite the fact that the various groups of Anabaptists manifested the greatest divergencies in matters of faith. In the religious symbol of adult baptism he created an invisible sign by which members of his Bund recognized one another. In this manner he united thousands of Anabaptists under his leadership by means of an innocent religious symbol[157] for the purpose of revolution. Soon his Anabaptists were in all parts of Germany, yet the strands of this Anabaptist net remained in his hands.[158] As a result, concluded Zimmermann, from about mid 1524[159] Müntzer began to advocate rebaptism for its utilitarian value without, however, rebaptising anyone himself.[160] In this manner Zimmermann harmonized the conflicting evidence and at the same time fitted it into the image of the rational revolutionary he had created for Müntzer.

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[157] It must be said here that rebaptism was a religious symbol which, through an edict of the Diet of Speyer, 1529, incurred the death penalty.

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[158] Zimmermann, Bauernkrieg (1841), II, 83-74. Deleted from 1856 edition. Compare (1856), I, 182. In the revised edition he stated instead: ". . . Sie gehörten nur mit zu seinen Verbündeten, und er war der leitende Obere des regsten Teiles diser unter sich selbst in ihren Glaubensartikeln nicht einigen, 'gar nach eines jeden Kopf geteilten Sekte.'"

[159] 1524 presumably was the time Müntzer was in Southern Germany. From Bullinger he discovered that Mantz and Grebel had ". . . den widertouff, usz den Müntzer gesogen . . . ," and from Franck he had learned that Müntzer had never rebaptized and had never belonged to the Anabaptist sect.

[160] Zimmermann continued: "So erlaubte Müntzer es sich, religiöse Zeichen und Formen als tauglicher Mittel zu seinem Zweck sich zu bedienen. Es ist ihm dieselbe Freiheit, die er auch sonst für sich und seine Sache in Anspruch nahm. So hüllte er seine Gedanken gerne vor dem Volke ein in Gesichte und Träume, die Berechnung seines Verstandes in das empfehlende Gewand göttlicher Offenbarungen. Es war ja in seinem Sinne und nach seiner Lehre der menschliche Geist, die erleuchtete Vernunft, die einzige Vermittlung, durch welche Gott sich den Menschen offenbarte, und wenn er einsam auf seinem Zimmer brütete und dachte, und seine Gedanken bis zum lauten Selbstgespräch heraustraten, so mochte er nachher es gerne für eine Zwiesprache mit Got gelten lassen," Ibid., p. 84.

If Müntzer had not been an Anabaptist, but had merely used the symbol of rebaptism, of adult baptism, as a sign whereby he could identify the adherents of his party, who then, had been the real Anabaptists? We have noted that Zimmermann stated the Anabaptists had had no unified confession of faith, but in spite of this he did name some specific names. The Zwickau Prophets had been the originators of the sect;[161] they were the first to be called Täufer for they had denied the validity of infant baptism and had baptized only those who had been instructed in the faith. Conrad Grebel, Balthasar Hubmaier, and Wilhelm Reublin had been other Anabaptists.[162] A third group of Anabaptists was possibly the group in Münster, a species of Anabaptists Zimmermann emphatically condemned.[163] Otherwise Zimmermann used the term very loosely to include all the itinerant Predikanten who wandered from one corner of Germany to the other and, as he thought, preached Müntzer's message of social revolution to the people.[164]

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[161] "Jene Schwärmer in Zwickau hatten sich bereits als eigenthümliche Sekte aufgethan, unter dem Namen Täufer . . . ." Ibid., p. 83.

[162] ". . . Auch gelehrte Männer standen ihm zu, namentlich Conrad Grebel, Sohn eines Rathsherrn zu Zürich, und Doktor Balthasar Hubmaier, der Prediger zu Waldshut." Ibid., p. 87. Also: ". . . Dieser Reublin taufte ihn, und Hubmaier taufte dann in die 300 Personen mit der Widertaufe." Ibid., p. 96.

[163] ". . . Man schloss von späteren, ein Jahrzehnt nach ihrem Tode [Müntzer's, etc.] hervorgetretene Erfolgen auf diese Männer zurück, mit deren Ideenkreis solche Kaum in entferntester Berührung waren, und der berechnete Revolutionsentwurf der strengen Volksmänner von 1524 und 1525 musste sich mit dem tollen münsterischen Fastnachtsspiel von 1536, der unter allem Feuer seiner Worte nüchterne Denker, Thomas Münzer, musste sich mit dem verrückten Bockolt zusammenwerfen lassen . . . ." Ibid., p. 52.

Zimmermann had brought the Zwickau Prophets together with Grebel and Hubmaier as Anabaptists. If he did this, how did he explain the movement of Anabaptism from Zwickau in Saxony to Zürich in Switzerland? Zimmermann did not give an explicit answer, but perhaps we can piece the picture together from various utterances he let fall by the way. We noted that when Müntzer had left Nuremberg for Swabia, he had found the ground already prepared for him by his Anabaptist agents.[165] Yet a few paragraphs later, on the basis of Sebastian Franck's authoritative statement, he stated that Müntzer had never been an Anabaptist, nor had he ever rebaptized. And, for that matter, neither had any of his secret disciples, of whom there were still many even after the latter's death, been Anabaptists.[166] On the following page, however, he stated that since about mid 1524 Müntzer had begun to advocate rebaptism. He said this only, however, after he had made it clear that Müntzer had used rebaptism as the initiation rite into his band of followers, his Bund.

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[164] In the 1856 edition he added other specific names to his list of Anabaptists: Jakob Gross of Waldshut, Peter Wagner, Kunz Ziegler, and the brothers Mayr of the Ansbach region, but especially Hans Hut of Bibra. Ibid. (1856), I, 180-82.

[165] Ibid. (1841), II, 83.

[166] Ibid.

But the question remains: why in the middle of the year 1524? It is possible, though highly improbable, that Zimmermann knew that Müntzer had written his "Protestation" in 1524,[167] in which the latter came to speak on baptism, for it seems very unlikely that Zimmermann knew more about Müntzer's writings than was contained in Strobel. Strobel, however, had only excerpted those parts of the "Protestation" which pertained to baptism, but had said neither where these passages came from nor when they had been written.[168] Even had he known, he must have realized that the "Protestation" had been written in the early part of 1524, for he stated that Müntzer had had to appear before the Saxon princes after the burning of the chapel at Mallerbach. Here he had delivered a sermon on certain passages from the Book of Daniel, known as the "Fürstenpredigt," which had later been printed. But because it had been printed, the princes had expelled Müntzer's private printer whom the latter had kept against an ordinance of 1522. He complained about this in a letter of July 13, 1524,[169] hence the "Protestation" must have been printed before this time, and even before Müntzer had appeared before the princes. Therefore the "Protestation" could, at the latest, have been written in April or early May. Had Zimmermann therefore referred to Müntzer's "Protestation," he would have had to date Müntzer's advocacy of rebaptism well before the middle of 1524—perhaps as early as the first part of the year. Nor did Zimmermann mention the "Protestation" after this, for he knew that Müntzer had to appear before the princes a second time on August 1, 1524, and had left Allstedt very shortly thereafter.[170] He also knew that Müntzer had thereupon gone to Nuremberg to try to have his "Schutzrede" against Luther printed.[171] Hence his statement, that Müntzer had begun to advocate rebaptism from the middle of 1524, cannot have derived from any knowledge Zimmermann had of its date of publication or even its contents.

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[167] Brandt, Leben und Schriften, p. 133.

[168] Strobel, Müntzer, p. 198.

[169] Zimmermann, Bauernkrieg (1841), II, 76.

Thus the question still remains, why the summer of 1524? Perhaps an answer can be found in the fact that Zimmermann believed Müntzer had gone to Nuremberg and Swabia in order to win followers for and influence the leaders of the oncoming revolt in this region.[172] Shortly after August 1, 1524, Müntzer had appeared in Nuremberg and had immediately won followers. But he had been expelled within a few weeks. From Nuremberg, Müntzer had wended his way penniless to the German regions bordering on Switzerland and had stayed in this general vicinity for approximately five months.[173] Zimmermann did not state exactly when Müntzer had gone back to Mühlhausen, but by March 17, 1525, he had been firmly in control of the Mühlhausen town council.[174] In the meantime, however, Müntzer had been in the vicinity of Fulda where he had taken part in an uprising, had been captured but not recognized, and then released again.[175] Thus it would seem that according to Zimmermann, Müntzer may well have come back to Central Germany in January of 1525. This time span would, therefore, correspond to the five months Zimmermann thought Müntzer had been in Southern Germany. It would follow from this that Zimmermann believed Müntzer had decided to advocate the use of adult baptism, or rebaptism, just shortly before he had come to Nuremberg in order to use it to unify his followers in preparation for the revolution which Müntzer had now decided upon.

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[170] _Ibid._, p. 78.

[171] _Ibid._, p. 81.

[172] "Zu derselben Zeit, als er, den Plan des bewaffneten Aufstandes in der Brust, von Nürnberg an den Oberrhein sich aufmachte, um den Vornehmen der dasigen Bauern näher zu seyn, und dasselbe fur seine Zwecke zu benutzen . . . ." _Ibid._, pp. 109-10.

Upon what basis could Zimmermann justify this conclusion? It appears very probable that he reached the above conclusion on the basis of Bullinger's Der Widertoufferen Ursprung. In this book Bullinger had stated that Müntzer had been in Basel, the Kletgau, the town of Griessen, and in the Landgrafschaft Stuhlingen where he had spread his poisonous teachings among the peasants. At the same time, continued Bullinger, Müntzer had spread the teaching of rebaptism.[176] But, as we have seen, Zimmermann, relying on Sebastian Franck, had stated that Müntzer had not been an Anabaptist nor had he ever rebaptized anyone.[177] Thus, Zimmermann must have concluded that Müntzer had decided to use the symbol for his own purposes, probably shortly before he came to Nuremberg, and had thus taught its use without actually rebaptizing anyone himself.[178] It was an ideal solution for his picture of a Müntzer above party lines, using a religious symbol in which to cloak his revolutionary political designs, and in so doing uniting all the revolutionary elements in Germany under his control.

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[173] Ibid., p. 84.

[174] Ibid., p. 610.

[175] Ibid., p. 606.

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[176] Bullinger, Der Widertoufferen Ursprung, p. 2.

[177] But Franck had also said that Müntzer had taught rebaptism. ". . . hat auch selbss nicht wider täufft / wie ich glaubwirdig bericht bin / willeicht zu früh gestorben / Aber den Widertauff gepredigt / und den Kindertauff verworffen." Chronica, p. CLX. Franck, however, did not state when and where Müntzer had taught rebaptism; Bullinger did.

[178] From Franck, Chronica, p. CLXIIII, Zimmermann must have also realized that the former dated the emergence of the Anabaptist movement from 1526, or at least from after the Peasant War, and for Zimmermann, Franck was one of the most reliable witnesses. In this instance, however, he did not care to follow his history.

If Müntzer had not rebaptized, who had? It is significant that Zimmermann does not mention one case of rebaptism in Saxony, by the Zwickau Prophets or anyone else. Yet he must have assumed that the disciples of Müntzer, the Anabaptists, had reached the various parts of Germany before the latter had come to Nuremberg and had prepared the ground for him. But Zimmermann had also very explicitly stated that Müntzer had not decided to advocate rebaptism until mid 1524, just shortly before he had come to Nuremberg. This would suggest that Zimmermann believed that rebaptism had been practised before 1524; just how long before, however, remained unclear.

Zimmermann mentioned only one specific instance of baptism—that of Hubmaier at the hands of Wilhelm Reublin. But he did not state who had baptized Reublin. He placed the date of the baptism sometime before Hubmaier's alleged meeting with Müntzer,[179] which meeting had become decisive for the direction of Hubmaier's future reformation activity.[180] Very shortly thereafter Hubmaier had won the town of Waldshut for the cause of the Peasant War, baptizing up to three hundred in one day.

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[179] "Noch ehe Hubmaier und Müntzer selbst zusammen traf, war er durch einen Anhänger desselben, Wilhelm Reblin von Rottenburg, a.R. für die Lehre vom neuen Gottesreich gewonnen. Dieser taufte ihn, und Hubmaier selbst taufte dann in die 300 Personen mit der Widertaufe." Zimmermann, Bauernkrieg (1841), II, pp. 95-96. It is not clear from what source Zimmermann gained his information, but what is clear is that he was badly mistaken here. The first rebaptism took place in Zurich, at the house of Felix Mantz, where Reublin was also baptized by Georg Blaurock. This took place on January 21, 1525, thus after Müntzer had left the region. See George Hunston Williams, The Radical Reformation (Philadelphia, 1962), pp. 121-23. As a result, Hubmaier, who was in fact baptized by Reublin, could not have been baptized before Müntzer appeared in the region of the Swiss border. In fact, Hubmaier was baptized on Easter, April 16, 1525, at least three months after Müntzer had left for Mühlhausen. Ibid., p. 136.

[180] "Gegen fünf Monate weilte und wirkte Münzer her und hin in den obern Landen, vom Elsass bis zum Bodensee. Dem Reformationseifer Balthasar Hubmaier's wurde dadurch eine Richtung gegeben welche der Müntzers ganz entsprach." Zimmermann, Bauernkrieg (1841), II, 89. The possibility of a meeting between Müntzer and Hubmaier is still debated. We shall come back to it later on.

Thus, said Zimmermann, Anabaptists were already present in this region before Müntzer had come and others were won through his activity. In these followers Müntzer had people upon whom he could depend. Already they were at work in the upper regions of the Donau, in Southern Germany and Switzerland. But toward the end of 1524, and especially in the first months of 1525, these Anabaptists moved into the Tyrol, into the valley of the Inn River, down the Rhine and into all parts of Southern Germany, flooding the countryside like the water of an overflowing river seeking out all the low lying territory.[181]

Wherever they came, the Anabaptists stiffened the determination of the peasants to revolt against their rulers, and where the peasants had not yet risen, they incited them to revolt. Their outreach into all parts of Germany and increase in number was phenomenal. Nor did they shy from using every possible means of extending their influence, even the belief in signs and wonders was used.[182]

In the first three years of their existence[183] even the enemies of the Anabaptists had to admit that the latter lived moral and upright lives. Beyond that, they were frugal, avoided excesses in food, drink, and clothing, and were eager to help one another. All those who had joined their ranks but did not meet their high moral standards were banned from their midst. They further demonstrated a great eagerness to propagate their ideas, even in the face of mortal danger. Where they were not allowed to preach openly, they met secretaly at night in the woods or secluded farmhouses. Soon, said Zimmermann, one could hear their revolutionary message being preached from the forests of Thuringia to the mountains of Switzerland and the valleys of Tyrol.

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[181] _Ibid_., pp. 423 and 545.

[182] _Ibid_., p. 546.

[183] Zimmermann is probably referring to the years 1522-1525.

Despite this good beginning, however, excesses amongst the Anabaptists did occur, especially in St. Gallen where the excitement made some Anabaptists go temporarily mad and turned people away in disgust. Such was also the mass temporary insanity which came upon the Anabaptists of Münster in 1534-35.

The message they preached was an apocalyptic one, forecasting doom to the ungodly and the Kingdom of God to the elect. This Kingdom of God was at hand and would be inaugurated by the elect of

God with sword in hand.[184] When the ungodly had been destroyed, God's Kingdom would descend upon earth; in it there would be no ruler and no ruled, all would be brothers and live under the direct rule of God.

Zimmermann cannot be blamed too much for falling heir to the theory of the connection between the Zwickau Prophets and the Swiss Anabaptists. As we have seen, this was the accepted theory until Heberle propounded the contrary theory of the autochthonous origin of the Swiss Anabaptists in 1858. From von Baczko, who relied upon Fueslin,[185] he knew that Balthasar Hubmaier had been involved in a dispute with Zwingli over infant baptism before the former ever met with Müntzer, if he ever met with him at all, and that Grebel and Mantz had demanded the abolition of infant baptism from Zwingli as early as in 1522. But von Baczko went on to state that he did not know how the idea of the denial of the validity of infant baptism had come from Zwickau to Zurich, whether by disciples of Nicolaus

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[184] Ibid., p. 85. Zimmermann quotes from Valerius Anshelm here, Berner Chronik (Bern, 1831), VI, 286, edited by E. Stierlin and J.R. Wyss. "Sie predigten in allen Winkeln nur die Sprüche aus altem und neuem Testament, da von Schwert, Harnisch, Kriegen und Würgen gesagt wird, und ziehens alles auf mörderische Kriege, Raub, Todtschlag und Aufruhr, wollen ja die frommsten Mörder seyn und alle Welt allein besitzen." It is interesting to note in this connection that what the chronicler considered a heinous crime becomes laudable revolutionary courage in the hands of Zimmermann.

[185] Fueslin, Beiträge zur Historie der Reformation, I, p. 153. See von Baczko, Münzer, p. 39.

Storch or through other heretics as Fueslin would have it. But he tended to believe that the origin of the idea had been Zwickau in any case. In spite of the fact that Grebel and Mantz had already demanded the abolition of infant baptism in 1522, however, von Baczko still numbered them among the disciples of Müntzer whom he had won when he had come to Basel and Zurich in 1524.[186]

But there are indications that Zimmermann once again misused his information, or at the very least did not bring out all the information he knew. He called Sebastian Franck one of the best informed men of his time when he relied upon him to prove that Thomas Müntzer had not been an Anabaptist, but did not state that Franck had also pointed out that the Anabaptists had arisen only after the Peasant War. Nor did he point out the fact that Franck had also stated that many of the Anabaptists later on tried to excuse Müntzer for his participation in the Peasant War. If he had, it might have seemed as though the Anabaptists had been pacifists, for why should they attempt to excuse Müntzer's revolutionary activities if they had been revolutionaries themselves? Had Zimmermann admitted for a moment that the Anabaptists had been pacifists, Müntzer's vast net of conspiratorial followers would have been drastically diminished in size, if not wiped out completely.[187]

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[186] Von Baczko, Münzer, pp. 39-40.

What is more, besides having a number of his facts wrong, Zimmermann failed to state precisely what the tenets of faith were the various groups of Anabaptists had in common and which divided them. The more nebulous he left the realm of their thought the more easily he could fit them into Müntzer's scheme and into their combined role as precursors of Enlightenment ideas. Thus, in the introduction to his second edition, Zimmermann pointed out that the Anabaptists had attempted to establish the Kingdom of God on earth in which both Church and State would have become superfluous, for man would then be ruled directly by God. This idea, said Zimmermann, was very much akin to the idea of the waning away of the State to which J.G. Fichte had given eloquent expression. According to the latter, it was the natural tendency of all governments to make themselves superfluous and wane into oblivion with time. The Anabaptists of the Reformation era, however, had overlooked that the abolition of the state would take time, that it was a natural process and would have to run its natural course, and had demanded the immediate abolition of the government. But at the bottom of their desire lay a grain of truth—a seed just in the process of sprouting.

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[187] In one instance, where he was speaking about the oath every member had to take to enter Müntzer's Bund, Zimmermann stated: "Ochs V, 497, will darus folgern, dass die Wiedertäufer dabei keine Hauptrolle [as followers of Müntzer] gespielt haben. Ohne Grund: nicht zu schwören, war ein Artikel nur einer Fraktion von Wiedertäufern, bei weitem nicht aller; die Wiedertäufer der That, die Prädikanten Vorwärts, die münzerischen Sendboten alle hielten sehr auf Bundeseide und Zusammenverpflichtungen." Bauernkrieg (1841), II, 549. Zimmermann, however, never clearly delineated exactly what the differences between the various Anabaptist groups were. It suited his purpose to leave the lines of demarkation vague so he could the more easily argue for the leadership of Müntzer over all of them.

J. Zimmermann and Engels

Engels was quite correct when he stated that Zimmermann's study contained the 'best compilation of the facts available.' But it would have been more correct to state that Zimmermann had provided the only compilation of the facts available, for, since Sartorius had written his history of the Peasant War in 1795, no general history of this event had appeared. The study by Sartorius had rested primarily upon the chronicles of the 16th century and had begun to fall into disrepute with the beginning of archival research. The two major studies of specific areas of the Peasant War by Oechsle and Bensen which appeared between those of Sartorius and Zimmermann had already demonstrated the falibility of the chroniclers. Zimmermann's study, therefore, was the first major study of the entire Peasant War to make any claim to be based on the documents. To the extent that Zimmermann's study was based upon archival research, it was fairly accurate. However, we have already pointed out, his reliability decreases the further north he moved geographically, for here he had no access to the sources. But it was precisely the revolt in this region, centering around the personality of Thomas Müntzer, which became the pivotal point of the entire revolt not only for Zimmermann, but also, and especially, for the Marxists. And for this region Zimmermann's study was by no means the best interpretation of the facts available.

Not only, however, did Zimmermann not have access to the archives for the revolt in the North, but the sources which were at his disposal were consciously distorted and misused by him. This is especially true with respect to the person of Thomas Müntzer, whom Zimmermann cast as the central figure of his drama. We have noted that it was with regard to Müntzer that Zimmermann's interpretation departed most radically from that of his forerunners, and yet precisely this part, in which Zimmermann remade Müntzer into a social revolutionary, rested upon a very weak foundation, a foundation more imaginary than real. What is more, it rested upon conscious falsification of the documents and uncritical selection of other facts that fitted into the picture he intended to paint of Müntzer. It is obvious that Engels did not know this, but the fact remains that he might have, had he seriously checked into Zimmermann's use of his sources. Had he been acquainted with the literature of the Peasant War to the appearance of Zimmermann's study and had he read Seidemann's biography of Müntzer carefully, which appeared in 1842, he might have found certain facts and even certain interpretations somewhat questionable, to say the least. Engels did note that Zimmermann's second edition was to some degree less revolutionary than the first and that Thomas Müntzer did not play quite the role he had played in the first edition, but this was not due to any new factual evidence Zimmermann had incorporated, rather it was due to Zimmermann's bad conscience regarding his interpretation from the facts. Thus it would seem that Engels was not so pleased with Zimmermann's collection of the facts, of which he knew nothing in the first place because he always took his material from secondary sources, rather, what attracted him was Zimmermann's interpretation. The very fact that no Marxist historian has taken the trouble to investigate Zimmermann's factual accuracy, and his interpretation from these facts, even though Engels' study rested wholly on Zimmermann's and Otto Merz, in 1889, pointed an accusing finger at

Zimmermann, and the way he had made use of the material Stephan had magnanimously turned over to him, makes one wonder whether the Marxists were afraid of discovering 'something rotten in the state of Denmark.' If, however, this was not the case, then one must conclude that the factual accuracy really does not matter that much to the Marxists.

Many aspects of Zimmermann's interpretation could be found in contemporary histories and insofar as this is true Zimmermann's study was bound by the times in which he lived and by the philosophy which he espoused. Yet, even at that, he had to distort his evidence in order to fit Müntzer into this interpretation. On the other hand, however, Zimmermann revolutionized the interpretation in certain respects. No one had dared to see in Müntzer the social revolutionary before him, although Treitschke had begun to move in that direction. No one had seen Müntzer as the leader of the entire revolt or the Anabaptists as his emissaries who had fanned the flames of revolt in all parts of the Empire. No one had made of Müntzer the great Volksreformator to whom the common people flocked after Luther turned his back on the Peasant War. Zimmermann, however, did.

Why did he do so? Probably in order to rouse the German nation to demand greater freedom for itself from its ruling powers, if not to rouse it to outright revolt against these powers. He glorified revolution in order to rouse to revolution. But 1848 was not only the time of the belated democratic revolution in Germany; 1848 was also the time of the Communist Manifesto which called the workers of the world to unite against the exploiting capitalistic classes. The bourgeois revolution and the proletarian revolution faced each other across the Great Divide of 1848, and just as the latter grew out of a dissatisfaction with the former yet shared many similar ideals with it, the Marxist Interpretation of the Reformation shares many similarities with the most radical interpretation of the Liberals prepared by the hands of Zimmermann, a member of the radical left in the Paulskirche of the Frankfurt Parliament.

CHAPTER V

GENERAL ASPECTS OF THE MARXIST INTERPRETATION

A. The Reformation as Era of Revolutionary Transition

Zimmermann's history of the Peasant War was well received not only by important contemporary historians such as Friedrich Christoph Schlosser and Heinrich Wuttke;[1] it was immediately acclaimed by various members of the pre-1848 radical Left. Even before Engels decided to utilize it for his 'Marxist' reinterpretation, others had lauded its revolutionary tenor and its unabashed partisanship for the revolutionary cause of 1525. Wilhelm Weitling, a close friend and associate of Moses Hess, as well as of Marx and Engels until their Brussels quarrel of 1846,[2] praised Zimmermann in his, "Das Evangelium eines armen Sünders," 1843, for having finally rolled back the veil of abuse that had covered the Anabaptists of the Reformation era. As a result of the revision brought about by Zimmermann's epoch-making, dispassionate study, the courageous radicals of the Reformation appeared in an altogether different light while the glory which had thus far surrounded others, especially Luther, had been decidedly diminished.[3] Alexander Weill, an Alsatian living in Paris and a close friend of Heinrich Heine, at that time in Paris as well, also praised Zimmermann's study and used it as a basis for his own interpretation of the Peasant War.[4] Weill first wrote his book in French in order, as he said, to ". . . fill my fellow countrymen, who have forgotten the German past, with a red-hot German fire, in order to show them that their great revolution was not unique in history, that the German people, whom they suppose dreaming and unrealistic, was not always so. On the contrary, already three hundred years ago Germany produced men who were more audacious in their thoughts than the French revolutionaries . . . ."[5] For both Weitling and Weill, therefore, the main attraction of Zimmermann's Bauernkrieg was twofold: its radical reorientation and its consequent glorification of the revolutionaries of 1525, and at the same time its utility in rousing to revolt the oppressed of 1848. It was Zimmermann's interpretation that attracted them, but both were aware that an interpretation had to rest on reliable evidence and hence both maintained, as Engels had, that Zimmermann had the best collection of the facts available.[6] Yet, again as with Engels, neither really knew enough about these 'facts' in order to be able to judge Zimmermann's collection.

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[1] See the Introduction to the 1939 Nauenhof edition of Zimmermann's Bauernkrieg by Hermann Barge, I, VIII and IX.

[2] See Weitling's letter to Moses Hess, Moses Hess Briefwechsel, pp. 151-52.

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[3] In Thilo Ramm, ed., Der Frühsozialismus (Stuttgart, 1956), p. 340.

[4] See Introduction by Johannes Nohl to the 1947 East German edition of Weill's Der Bauernkrieg (Weimar, 1947), pp. VII-VIII. Weill's Bauernkrieg was first published in French in 1847, under the title, "La guerre des paysans," in Fourier's Democratie pacifique, but shortly thereafter appeared in book form. Weill himself later translated it into German and had it published by C.W. Leske in Darmstadt. See Introduction, p. VII.

Heine was also a close friend of Marx and Engels. See the letters of Marx to Heine of January 12, 1845, March 24, 1845, April 5, 1846, and of Engels to Marx of January 15, 1847, March 9, 1847, October 25/26, 1847, November 14/15, 1847, and January 14, 1847. M/E, Werke, XXVII.

[5] Quoted in ibid., p. IX.

The subsequent history of Zimmermann's Bauernkrieg in the Marxist historiography of the Reformation substantiates the suspicion that it was the latter's revolutionary reinterpretation of the Peasant

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[6] Weitling stated: ". . . Erst Zimmermann hat der Geschichte mit unsäglichem Fleiss und Mühen den Schleier gelüftet; und an die Stelle des Abscheues, der auf den Männern der damaligen Bewegung lag, tritt nur Bewunderung, während der Glanz mancher gepriesenen Reformatoren, besonders Luthers, sich in diesem Flammen-Spiegel der kühn veröffentlichten aus dem Dunkel alter Dokumente hervorgezogenen Wahrheit bedeutend trübt." Der Frühsozialismus, p. 340. Weill put the same idea in these words: ". . . Zimmermann ist Dichter, Denker und Künstler. Er zuerst hat all die Steine deutschverlassenen Tempels langsam gesammelt und hat sie, wenn auch mit etwas Unordnung, zusammengefügt, doch mit Geisteskitt der Philosophie befestigt und sie mit allen Farben der poetischen Wahrheit gemalt. Es wird wenig Neues mehr nach Zimmermann zu entdecken sein . . . ." Bauernkrieg, p. VIII.

War and his glorification of revolution as such which constituted its chief attraction to the revolutionaries of 1848. Both Zimmermann's and Weill's studies were edited anew in the Russian occupied zone of Germany after World War II, Zimmermann's in 1952 and Weill's already in 1947. In both instances the revolutionary aspect of the studies was emphasized: on the page before Zimmermann's own introduction to his study stood Engels' quotation praising the former's 'revolutionary instinct';[7] and in the introduction to Weill's Bauernkrieg, Nohl stated: "The Alsatian, Alexander Weill, produced a fine revolutionary study which has retained its usefulness even today . . . ." But, Nohl added, a scientific understanding of the Peasant War was first achieved by Engels.[8]

It has already been noted that Engels himself singled out Zimmermann's revolutionary ardor for special praise; it was this that really attracted him to the latter's study. In the introduction to his reinterpretation Engels stated: "The German people are by no means lacking in revolutionary tradition. There were times when Germany produced characters that could match the best men in the revolutions of other countries; when the German people manifested an endurance and energy, which, in a centralized nation, would have brought the most magnificent results; when the German peasants and plebians were pregnant with ideas and plans which often made their descendants shudder . . . ."[9] Engels' purpose, to rouse the lower classes to such revolutionary ardor once again two years after the events of 1848, is made evident in the lines which followed the ones just quoted: ". . . In contrast to present-day enfeeblement which appears everywhere after two years of struggle [since 1848] it is timely to present once more to the German people those awkward but powerful and tenacious figures of the great Peasant War."[10] Engels had hoped for the proletarian revolution in 1848, but it had not come. However, he did not lose hope;[11] he knew from his and Marx's analysis of history that the proletarian revolution would come just as surely as the first phase of the bourgeois revolution had come in 1525. It was therefore only a matter of arousing the German proletariat to an awareness of this inevitable revolution and inciting it to revolutionary action, and the victory of the proletariat would become a reality. It was precisely this that Marx pointed out in his only reference to Engels' reinterpretation of the Peasant War. Writing in a letter of 1856 to Engels, he said: "The whole thing in Germany will depend on the possibility to back the Proletarian revolution by some second edition of the Peasants' War. Then the whole thing will proceed famously."[12] Revolution was the theme and revolution the goal of all Marxist agitation, for through revolution the oppression of the proletariat would be turned into the dictatorship of the proletariat. And the dictatorship of the proletariat led directly to the classless communistic society.

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[7] Wilhelm Zimmermann, Der Grosse Deutsche Bauernkrieg (Berlin, 1952), p. 5. This is a reproduction of the 1891 edition of Wilhelm Blos.

[8] Weitling, Bauernkrieg, p. VIII.

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[9] M/E, Werke, VII, 329.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Even as late as 1892 he could write to Marx's daughter, Laura Lafargue, on December 5, 1892: ". . . Our revolution of 48/49 was too short and too incomplete to wipe that [impression of the philistine . . . on the working class] out altogether. Of course, the next revolution which is preparing in Germany with a consistency and steadiness unequalled anywhere else, would come of itself in time, say 1898-1904 . . . ." Correspondance, III, 238.

Zimmermann's history of the Peasant War did not, however, fall into oblivion after Engels' reinterpretation appeared. It continued to play an important role in Leftist literature on the social upheaval of 1525. The first to bring out a new edition of Zimmermann's Bauernkrieg after the latter's death was Wilhelm Blos[13] for the Dietz

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[12] Marx to Engels, April 16, 1856, M/E, Werke, XXIX, 47.

[13] Wilhelm Blos, 1849-1927, was a member of the German Social Demokratic Party, a historian of sorts, and a journalist who wrote for the Volksstaat as well as Die Zeit, both organs of the above political party. He was also repeatedly a representative of the SPD in the Reichstag. In 1918 he became President of Württemberg.

Verlag in Stuttgart, 1891. Blos cannot be called an orthodox Marxist,[14] nevertheless his edition of Zimmermann's *Bauernkrieg*, inspired by his secular outlook on life, was the edition that was published anew by the East Germans in 1952.

Blos himself had high praise for Zimmermann's history. In his introduction he stated: "He who knows how much personal preference and prejudice, coupled with a predetermined purpose, has controlled the writing of history cannot help but pay homage to a man who has studied the historical documents under the auspices of a scrupulous conscience and has then allowed history to declare its judgment. Not for nothing did Friedrich Christoph Schlosser call Zimmermann 'the historian of truth.'"[15] Blos had had to shorten this 'truth' considerably in order to be able to produce a Volksausgabe, but in the pruning he had been careful not to change the form or the content of Zimmermann. What he had deleted were merely discourses of a religious or theological nature which the common man would not understand anyway. In no way, however, had this produced any essential change in Zimmermann's study![16]

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[14] In a letter to Engels of May 2, 1883, Bebel wrote: "Ich weiss nicht ob Du schon von anderer Seite ein genaueres Bild über den K(openhagener) Kongress bekommen hast. Der S(ozial)d(emokrat) kann natürlich nur unter Zensur berichten. Es kam zwischen den beiden Richtungen zu ziemlich lebhaften Auseinandersetzungen, speziell zwischen Geiser und mir. Wohl sind alle in 'Prinzip' einig, aber ich brauche Dir nicht zu sagen, dass es denn doch sehr wesentlich ist, wie man sich den Kampf für das Prinzip vorstellt. Und da unterliegt es keinem Zweifel, dass es unter unsern Parlamentlern speziell Leute gibt, die, weil sie an die Höhe der revolutionären Entwicklung nicht *glauben* [my italics], zum Parlamenteln geneigt sind und jedes scharfe Vorgehen sehr ungern sehen. Wer *glaubt*, dass wir noch mindestens hundert Jahre bis zu einer sozialen Revolution haben wird anders auftreten wie jener der sie in absehbarer Ferne erblickt. Hat doch Geiser—allerdings nicht auf dem Kongress—die Auffassung vom Klassenkampf als eine Marxsche 'Erfindung' bezeichnet und bedauert, dass das Blatt (der Sozialdemokrat) erscheine. Blos soll sich, wie mir Kautsky und ein anderer zuverlässiger Parteigenosse in Stuttgart kürzlich mitteilte, bei der Totenfeier fur M(arx) bei der er die Rede hielt, über letzterem in ziemlich gehässiger Weise ausgelassen haben. Ausserdem steht Bl(os) fest zu G(ei) ser . . . ." *Briefwechsel mit Engels*, pp. 154-55.

Others were also to turn to Zimmermann again and again. Kautsky referred to him time and again in Volume II of his study, Vorläufer des neueren Sozialismus.[17] Belfort Bax, an English socialist, sometime friend and frequent visitor of Engels, praised the work highly.[18] Even Rosa Luxemburg wrote to an unknown friend: "Good that you are reading Engels' Bauernkrieg. Have you already read Zimmermann's? Engels, in reality, does not give a history but only a philosophical critique of the Peasant War; the real factual meat is to be found in Zimmermann."[19] The more recent dogmatic Marxist literature from Russia and East Germany, especially since 1952, however, obediently repeat Engels' reservation: Zimmermann had the best collection of the facts but failed to see the inner relationship between material base, class structure, and ideological superstructure. His revolutionary élan, however, has merited repeated praise from the Marxists.

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[15] Wilhelm Blos, ed., Dr. W. Zimmermann's Grosser Deutscher Bauernkrieg (Stuttgart, 1891), p. XI.

[16] Ibid., pp. 1-2. Hermann Barge in the introduction to his 1939 edition of Zimmermann quotes Dahlmann-Waitz, Quellenkunde zur deutschen Geschichte, 1912 edition, which stated: "Die dritte Auflage ist verstümmelt und wissenschaftlich wertlos." I, XXIII.

[17] "Wir kennen unter den selbständigen Darstellungen Münzers nur eine, die der historischen Bedeutung des Mannes und seiner Persönlichkeit gerecht geworden ist: diejenige, die uns W. Zimmermann in seiner 'Geschichte des grossen Bauernkriegs' gibt . . . ." (Berlin, 1947), p. 41.

It has been noted that the French Revolution kindled a renewed interest in the German Peasant War of 1525; the rebellions of 1848 had the same effect. However, there was one salient difference between the people and parties of the 1790's and the 1840's in whom this interest had been kindled: those from 1790 to Zimmermann feared the negative effects revolution would have on the progress of humanity, whereas those from the 1840's on, including Zimmermann, believed revolution necessary to progress. But the problem of revolution and its effects on the progress of society was the central problem which attracted the one group as well as the other to the history of the German Peasant War. It is not at all strange, therefore, that these groups should view the Reformation from the point of view of their own revolutionary interests and the interests of the peasants of 1525. The growing secularization of civilization and the increasing disinterest with the 'enthusiasm' of religious fanatics also played a significant role in determining the new point of view. But perhaps most important in shaping the new interpretation of the Reformation era as an era of revolutionary transition was the concern of the writers with the political events of their own time and their desire, yes—even determination, to change the course of events, radically if necessary, in the political realm.

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[18] ". . . Of all the works on the Peasant War that of Zimmermann still holds the first place alike for comprehensiveness of view and accuracy. Many details, it is true, have been corrected and expanded by later research, but for sympathetic understanding of the movement, combined with historical insight Zimmermann has yet hardly been equalled and certainly not surpassed." E. Befort Bax, The Peasant War in Germany 1525-1526 (London, 1899), p. xi.

[19] Rosa Luxemburg an einen Unbekannten, April 9, 1915, Benedict Kautsky, ed., Rosa Luxemburg, Briefe an Freunde (Zürich, 1950), p. 195.

Zimmermann had already pointed to the revolutionary stages in the history of Western civilization from the Peasant War of 1525 to the French Revolution of 1789, with intermediate stages in England

and the United States of America. As a result of these revolutions England, the United States, and France had all been able to establish democratic forms of government which appealed to the Liberal, Zimmermann; only Germany had failed. Zimmermann hoped this historical failure would be repealed by the events of 1848. Engels viewed these revolutions in much the same light as Zimmermann, the only difference being that whereas Zimmermann believed the democratic revolution to be the goal of all history, Engels saw it only as the last stage on the road to the proletarian revolution[20] and the establishment of communism with its classless society. For both Zimmermann and Engels, however, the period from 1525 to 1789 in France, and, hopefully, 1848 in Germany, was the age of the democratic, or in Engels' terminology, the beourgeois revolution. For both, 1525 was the first stage of this revolutionary period.

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[20] Even before the 1848 rebellion Engels and Marx believed that the 'bourgeois' revolution had to take place in Germany before the proletarian revolution could become a reality. Wilhelm Weitling wrote to Moses Hess on March 31, 1846, concerning this problem: "Wir waren gestern abend einmal wieder in pleno versammelt. (Marx, Engels, Philippe Gigot, Louis Heilberg, Sebastian Seiler, Edgar von Westphalen, Wilhelm Weitling, Joseph Weydemeyer, P.W. Annenkow) . . . Die Frage war: Wie ist am besten in Deutschland Propaganda zu machen? Seiler hatte dieselbe gestellt; er erklärte aber, er könne auf die Erläuterung derselben diesen Abend nicht eingehen, es könne sonst manches Delikate berührt werden usw. Marx trieb vergebens S(eiler) an. Beide wurden aufgeregt, Marx sehr heftig. Endlich erläuterte letzterer die Frage. Das Resümee war: . . .

6. Von der Verwirklichung des Kommunismus kann zunächst nicht die Rede sein; die Bourgeoisie muss erst ans Ruder kommen . . . ." Moses Hess Briefwechsel, pp. 150-51.

In his *Bauernkrieg* of 1850 Engels had not yet fitted the Reformation era into the larger Marxist frame of reference. Although he spoke of the Reformation as a bourgeois movement[21] and of Luther as the representative of the bourgeois party,[22] he failed to make clear what stage the bourgeois revolution had reached by 1525. In the following years, especially after 1884, he came back to the problem time and time again, for this was the period in which Engels began to rethink and plan to rework the whole of his *Bauernkrieg*.[23] To Bernstein he wrote on November 11, 1884, that the Peasant War would become the turning point (Wendepunkt) of all German history,[24] and to

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[21] M/E, *Werke*, VII, 347.

[22] *Ibid*.

[23] On April 18, 1884, Engels wrote to Paul Lafargue: ". . . et la 4^e édition de *La Guerre des paysans*—nouvelles révisions et nouvelles préfaces a faire!" *Correspondance*, I, 197. On April 26, 1884, he wrote Kautsky: ". . . Der Bauernkrieg wird *ganz* umgearbeitet . . . ." E/K, *Briefwechsel*, p. 112. To Bernstein he wrote on May 23, 1884: "Bauernkrieg wird ganz neu, mit Ausnahme der militärischen Geschichtserzählung . . . ." Eduard Bernstein, ed., *Die Briefe von Friedrich Engels an Eduard Bernstein* (Berlin, 1925), p. 148. (Hereafter cited as *Briefe an Bernstein*), and again on November 11, 1884, on the same topic, *ibid*., p. 160.

[24] *Briefe an Bernstein*, p. 160.

Sorge he wrote on December 31, 1884, that it would become the pivotal point (Angelpunkt) of German history.[25] In other letters of the same year he stated that he had been doing a considerable amount of reading and had drawn up some preliminary outlines.[26] In one of these outlines, found in his papers, he stated: "Reformation—Lutheran and Calvinistic—Revolution No. 1 of the bourgeoisie, in which the Peasant War is the most critical episode . . . ."[27] Two years later, then, writing in his "Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy," he could write: ". . . When these burghers had become sufficiently strengthened, their struggle against the feudal nobility, which till then had been predominantly local, began to assume national dimensions. The first great action occurred in Germany—the so-called Reformation."[28]

Thus, by 1886 it had become very clear to Engels that the Reformation was the first stage of the bourgeois revolution in which the Peasant War was the decisive event. He repeated this in a letter to Kautsky of September 15, 1889, calling the Reformation the ". . . first bourgeois revolution in religious guise . . . ."[29] And in his last letter to Kautsky of May 21, 1895, he again referred to the Reformation in the above terms.[30]

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[25] Quoted in Engels, Der deutsche Bauernkrieg (Berlin, 1965), p. 147, note 21.

[26] Engels to Bernstein of May 23, 1884. Briefe an Bernstein, p. 148.

[27] Given in M/E, Werke, XXI, 402.

[28] On Religion, p. 265.

The characterization of the Reformation as the first stage in the bourgeois revolution has consequently become an accepted aspect of the Marxist interpretation of the Reformation.[31] The only clarification that needed to be added to Engels' characterization was a clarification as to the approximate beginning and end of this period. This Max Steinmetz proposed to do in the first two theses he drew up regarding the frühbürgerliche Revolution.[32] In the first of these theses Steinmetz stated: "'The first great revolutionary action of the rising bourgeoisie' (Engels) in Germany reached its climax in the Reformation and the Peasant War (1517-1525), the most important mass revolutionary movement of the German people before the November Revolution of 1918 . . . ."[33] If this was the climax of the bourgeois revolution, then the beginning at least, if not the end, of the development toward this peak had to be determined. And so Steinmetz proceeded to lay down the guidelines for a periodization of this *frühbürgerliche Revolution*.

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[29] E/K, Briefwechsel, p. 247.

[30] Ibid., p. 435.

[31] It would be tedious to point this out in detail here.

[32] They first appeared in ZfG, I (1960), 114-24.

[33] Ibid., p. 114.

He argued for a division of the period covering the whole of the revolutionary period into three parts: the pre-revolutionary, the climax, and the subsiding of the revolution. He proposed to date the first period from the beginning of the revolutionary Hussite influence on Germany and the printing of the *Reformatio Sigismundi* in 1476 to the beginning of the Lutheran Reformation in 1517. The second, climactic stage of the *frühbürgerliche Revolution* was then to date from 1517 to the end of the Peasant War in 1525, while the third and last period was to end with the suppression of the Anabaptist revolt in Münster of 1535 and the Wittenberg Concordat of 1536 which brought an end to the revolutionary activity.[34]

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[34] *Ibid*. The theses were printed again in G. Brendler, ed., *Die frühbürgerliche Revolution in Deutschland* (Berlin, 1961), pp. 7-16, and served as the periodization scheme for Steinmetz's *Deutschland von 1476 bis 1648* (Berlin, 1965), which appeared in the series: *Lehrbuch der deutschen Geschichte*, edited by Joachim Streisand.

Thus the 'Age of the Reformation' became the age of the frühbürgerliche Revolution in Deutschland. According to Marx and Engels' own confession in 1846, however, precisely this bourgeois revolution had not yet been successful in Germany. Weitling quoted Marx as having said: "One cannot yet speak of realizing a communistic society in Germany; first the bourgeoisie must come to power . . . ."[35] But if the bourgeoisie had not yet come to power in 1846, one can at the most speak of the failure of the bourgeois revolution, as Marx and Engels did time and time again.[36] It is, therefore, a little doubtful whether one can speak of an era of the bourgeois revolution, for the bourgeoisie as a class never really revolted in 16th-century Germany and never really gained any political power. The attempt by the German bourgeoisie to gain political power came in 1848. The question, of course, is whether, or in how far, the German bourgeoisie of the 16th century constituted a class in the first place and whether, or in how far, this class manifested revolutionary tendencies. The really revolutionary class of 16th-century Germany was the peasantry, but perhaps even more than these, the peasant leaders. How many of these came from the bourgeoisie shall be made clear later on.

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[35] Wilhelm Weitling to Moses Hess, March 31, 1846. Moses Hess Briefwechsel, p. 151.

[36] Engels, already in his Bauernkrieg, p. 351, and in numerous later letters.

B. The Material Base of the Reformation

The answer to the above discrepancies seems to lie in the Marxist theory of material base and ideological superstructure and its application to 16th-century German history.

To call Engels' study of the Reformation a materialistic or a strictly economic one would be to oversimplify his analysis; it was far more a sociological analysis, but a sociological analysis made by means of the sociological categories drawn from 19th-century capitalistic society. Because this was so, Engels' sociological analysis was based on certain assumptions. The first and primary assumption was that a certain mode of production brought a certain social class to power. A second assumption was that this class would espouse or produce a certain ideology which would give expression to its class characteristics. The third assumption was that the ruling class was constantly involved in a continuing, more or less severe, class conflict not only with the class being removed from power but also with the new, emerging class. These assumptions, as noted in Chapter I, have been built into the Marxist sociological categories by means of which they analyse history.

According to these sociological categories then, the 'ultimately' motivating force in history was the mode of production.[37] It was therefore of the first importance that they determine when and where the feudal mode of production had changed to the capitalistic mode, to name only the most important mode of production. In "Die deutsche Ideologie," 1845-46, they stated that the first flowering of manufacturing, and hence of the capitalistic mode of production,[38] had taken place in Italy and then in Flanders.[39] Neither here nor later in Das Kapital did Marx state exactly when the capitalistic mode of production had begun; it is evident, however, that Marx and Engels, as well as subsequent Marxist historians, equated the beginnings of Renaissance culture in Italy with the birth of capitalism and the rise of the bourgeoisie as a class.[40] As a result, 14th-century Florence has been singled out as the birthplace of the capitalistic mode of production where the emerging cloth industry first showed signs of developing a capitalistic mode of production.[41] As a matter of fact, it was also the cloth industry of other countries which manifested the first signs of the capitalistic mode of production, utilizing the capital which had been accumulated through trade with the Orient.[42] This Oriental trade, the appearance of American gold and silver imports on the European market, the gradual growth and development of the manufacturing industries with the consequent rapid increase in the volume of trade, all of these called for the existence of a new class—the bourgeoisie.[43]

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[37] In his introduction to the 1908 eidition of Engels' *Bauernkrieg*, Mehring put it in these words: "So bedeutend die Schrift zur Zeit ihres Erscheinens einen entscheidenden Fortschritt in der historischen Erkenntnis des Reformationszeitalters, dessen Bild bis dahin in verschwimmenden Umrissen schwankte, verhüllt, wie es war, durch den Schleier der religiösen Ideologie. Indem Engels die ökonomischen Triebkräfte der Zeit enthüllt als die in letzter Instanz entscheidenden Hebel ihrer Entwicklung, sanken jene Schleier, und das bunt schimmernde Bild der durcheinander tobenden Interessen entwirte sich, beleuchtet durch die neuen Produktionskräft, die an verlebten Produktionsformen rüttelten . . . ." Engels, *Bauernkrieg* (Berlin, 1908), p. 8.

[38] According to Marx, the heart of capitalism lay in its mode of production. Therefore such appearances as the exchange and circulation of goods, money and banking were secondary manifestations of the basic mode of production. The importation of goods from the Orient and the resulting profits reaped by the merchants, the growth of money and banking, and the formation of companies of merchant adventurers, did not noticeably change the feudal mode of production in Italy. Not until industrial firms appeared which manufactured goods in which laborers worked for hire and the owner reaped the profits, could one, according to Marx, speak of early capitalism.

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[39] M/E, Werke, III, 54-55. In Das Kapital Marx again pointed to Italy as the country in which capitalism originated. Ibid., XXIII, 744, n. 189.

[40] See my forthcoming article on "Renaiisance" in The Soviet System and Democratic Society (Freiburg i. B., 1965-). In Das Kapital he was somewhat more specific, stating: ". . . Although we come across the first beginnings of capitalistic production as early as the fourteenth or fifteenth century, sporadically, in certain towns of the Mediteranean [not in Florence as later Marxists have determined], the capitalist era dates from the sixteenth century . . . ." Quoted in Marx, Selected Writings, p. 134.

[41] See "Renaissance."

[42] "Die deutsche Ideologie," M/E, Werke, III, 55.

In "Die deutsche Ideologie" Marx and Engels had given only a very general outline of the rise of capitalism; in his Bauernkrieg Engels tried to be more specific as to the material basis of the German bourgeoisie.[44] German industry, began Engels, had experienced a decisive expansion in the 14th and 15th centuries. In the cities, guild manufacturing began to replace the more local feudal industries in the countryside, producing goods for an ever expanding local as well as foreign trade. Two industries especially experienced an expanding production and market: the cloth industry and gold and silver mining which produced the raw material for the luxury articles demanded more and more by the nobility and the rising bourgeoisie. A number of more or less important scientific discoveries, such as the invention of gunpowder and the printing press, had also added decisively to the upsurge in industry.[45]

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[43] Ibid., p. 57.

[44] Engels apparently only worked with the material Zimmermann had collected, and Zimmermann had not been interested in a sociological analysis.

[45] M/E, Werke, VII, 330.

With the rise of industrial production, albeit only of a guild nature, came the rise of trade. Augsburg, long the center of trade for goods coming from the Levant, continued in this role for some time and was joined by Nuremberg as an axis in the predominantly south-to-north land trade. In Northern Germany, the Hansa cities controlled the trade routes as well as trade centers. At the same time mining became an important industry and the German miners the most skillful at their trade. And an increasing agricultural production supplied an expanding economy with an increasing supply of food.[46] But even at this, the German national production lagged behind that of other countries: its agriculture produced less than the Dutch and English; its industry could not match the production of Italian, Flemish, or English industry; and its sea power, and consequently its trading potential, was being overshadowed and then displaced by the Dutch and English sea power, while the center of trade moved from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic and all but stopped German's overland trade.[47]

Engels saw the major reason for Germany's failure to realize a centralized government, such as France and England had established, in the fact that Germany lagged behind the other countries in industrial production and trading ability. The rise of industrial production and trade in these two countries had made it necessary for them to become a political unity in order to utilize to the full their industrial and trading potential. Germany's industrial and trading interests had never become powerful enough for this and, with Germany's exclusion from the world market by the Dutch and English sea powers, the political divisions of Germany stemming from the feudal system could not be overcome. Instead, the great princes of Germany were able to establish themselves all the more securely in their local territories and concluded pacts with one another to foil the attempts of the Emperor to unify Germany.[48]

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[46] *Ibid*., p. 331.

[47] *Ibid*.

Against this background, Engels saw the following changes taking place in the German social structure. The great nobles of Medieval Germany had become the nearly autonomous princes of the time of the Reformation. In their rise to power they had subjugated a number of the free cities and many lesser nobles. But their hunger for power had in no wise been satiated; they were still on the lookout for new territories and cities to conquer to strengthen their position even more.[49] As a direct result of this rise to nearly absolute power on the part of the princes, the lower nobility and the knights lost what status they had, thus creating tension between the two estates. The rising cost of living the life of a noble coupled with the threat of extinction from the more powerful princes forced them into either the army of the princes or into bourgeois occupations. An important factor in this demotion of the lower nobility was the rise of new methods and weapons employed in warfare.[50]

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[48] Ibid., pp. 331-32. Instead of being able to draw a picture of capitalistic growth, increase in trade, political unity and the like, essential prerequisites for the growth of a bourgeoisie according to Marxist theory, Engels had to speak in negative terms. If he admitted that France, England, and Holland were ahead of Germany in some or all respects, why then did the first act of the bourgeois revolution take place in Germany, even if only in religious form? Engels failed to answer.

Opposite, and to a certain degree on the same social level with the secular noble, stood the high prelates of the Church hierarchy. These were the true exponents of the ideology of Medieval feudalism.[51] Like their secular counterpart, they were great lords in their own right or else held sway over vast domains as the vassals of great secular lords. They exercised the same rights over their vassals as the secular lords, but added to these all the chicanery of a religious tyranny which made use of religious threats to keep its subordinates tractable. Thus they garnered in not only great wealth, which, however, never seemed to satisfy their greed, but they also garnered in the ever mounting hatred of an oppressed populace, which saw clearly enough the discrepancy between their teaching and their action, and the jealousy of the secular princes who could not harvest as much money as their ecclesiastical counterpart.[52]

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[49] Ibid., p. 332.

[50] *Ibid.*, p. 33.

[51] *Ibid.*, p. 334.

A third center of major power in 16th-century Germany were the cities. At the top of their social hierarchy in rank and power stood the patrician families. They were the richest, exercised the greatest, if not exclusive, political power, and, according to Engels, exploited the city populace as well as the peasants attached to the city's surrounding territory. By the 16th century, however, an opposition, consisting of the rising bourgeoisie and those in the city excluded from the rights of citizenship, began to challenge the patrician's claim to the exclusive right to rule. Especially the bourgeoisie demanded a voice in the political decisions of the city commensurate with its growing financial power.

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[52] Ibid., p. 336.

In some instances it made common cause with the 'plebian opposition,' but in any case it constituted the great majority of the city populations.[53]

The peasants and the pre-proletariat, forced to bear all the financial burdens and social stigma in order to make life pleasant and leisurely for the rest, took up the bottom rung of the social ladder. In the final analysis, the peasant bore the brunt of the fiscal exploitation, and yet, said Engels, it was difficult to bring him to revolt. Nor had he been able to rise in revolt successfully until other estates joined him, as happened in the first years of the Reformation.[54] What was it that had brought about even a temporary union of these various estates of 16th-century Germany in open revolt against the papacy? Engels believed it had been the rapid dispersal of the revolutionary religious and political ideas of the Reformation. But, he added quickly, the wars that resulted from the clash of these ideas were really motivated by material causes![55]

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[53] Ibid., p. 337. Although Engels does not speak out openly and accuse the bourgeoisie of 16th-century Germany of being less revolutionary than it should have been according to the theory of the class war, yet he does say the following: "Wir werden sehen, wie während der Bewegung des sechszehnten Jahrhunderts diese 'gemässigte,' 'gesetzliche,' 'wohlhabende' und 'intelligente' Opposition genau dieselbe Rolle spielt, und genau mit demselbem Erfolg, wie ihre Erbin, die konstitutionelle Partei, in der Bewegung von 1848 und 1849."

[54] Ibid., pp. 338-41.

[55] Ibid., pp. 342-43.

After having outlined Engels' ideas concerning the material basis for the first bourgeois revolution and the class conflicts resulting from this new 'mode of production,' we must ask ourselves, exactly what was Engels attempting to prove? The historical fact of the Peasant War of 1525 stared him in the face. However, at the same time another historical fact, the Reformation, glared at him from the other side. But, according to Marxist theory, capitalism began in the 16th century[56] and, consequently, if any revolution was to take place, it should have been the revolution of the bourgeoisie.[57] The bourgeoisie, however, did not revolt.[58] Thus Engels was faced with a Peasant War he wanted to call a bourgeois revolution; yet the bourgeoisie he needed to satisfy his theoretical requirements did not even have its capitalistic mode of production upon which to rise to power, for Engels could find only guild production in 16th-century Germany. All Engels was able to do was to point to a lagging economy and a sagging trade upon which a not very revolutionary bourgeoisie carried out a revolution in religious guise! He emphasized the bitterness of the class conflicts, yet had to admit that a successful revolution could have been brought about only by a closing of the class ranks. Then, when he thought that the bourgeoisie had betrayed the peasant cause, he had bitter words of condemnation for them. According to his theory, the German bourgeoisie between 1525 and 1848 should have gained immeasurably in revolutionary ardor, but he was constantly finding the same philistine qualities in the 'petite bourgeois' of 1525 that he had found in the bourgeoisie of 1848.[59]

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[56] See note 40, p. 241.

[57] It is for this reason, of course, that Marx and Engels could argue that the Peasant War, especially under the leadership of Thomas Müntzer, could not win; their time in the historical dialectic had not yet come! See "Thomas Müntzer in Marxist Thought," p. 310.

[58] Engels, however, had not yet defined the term with any precision or proven, by concrete examples, that such a class existed in 16th-century Germany, or, if it existed, how large it was.

But even in order to be able to speak of a bourgeois revolution in religious guise, Engels had to make the Roman Catholic Church the ideological exponent of feudalism, and Protestantism the ideological exponent of capitalism. Yet he never demonstrated why this should be the case. Nor did he demonstrate that the bourgeoisie—no matter how he modified the term—in fact owned the means of production and reaped the benefits, much less that they should be revolutionary even if they had owned the means of production. Engels' great crime was that he proceeded from certain theoretical presuppositions, presuppositions developed from a prejudiced criticism of 19th-century society, and then attempted to juggle the historical facts of the Reformation into this theoretical framework. It did not seem to matter to him that he had not proven any of the 'real' connections between his various theoretical presuppositions and the historical reality of 16th-century Germany.

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[59] ". . . Die Revolution von 1848 beweist, wenn auch nichts für den Fortschritt Deutschlands . . . ." M/E, Werke, VII, 413.

If this was really a bourgeois revolution in religious guise,[60] what became of it? In his Bauernkrieg, Engels stated that Luther had not only sold out the peasants' revolution, but also the bourgeois revolution to the princes during the Peasant War.[61] Yet the Reformation continued on apace as a princely movement. Thus it seems, Engels believed the bourgeois ideology to have undergone a change making it more acceptable to the princes.[62] This explanation, however, raises a number of problems. If Luther could betray the bourgeois cause to the princes, then he played a far greater role in the history of the Reformation than he should have according to the Marxist theory of the role of the individual in society. On the other hand, if Luther's action was merely the result of the sagging material base of the bourgeois class at the time of the Reformation, then why blame him? If Luther, as Engels maintained elsewhere, was the exponent of the bourgeois ideology,[63] then he could not be blamed for expressing ideologically what Engels had to admit economically; namely, that the bourgeoisie was losing what little economic base it had. Engels admitted as much later on, in 1884, when he stated: "Germany lost her position as world trading center and was forced off the main trading routes; this broke the power of the bourgeoisie, of the Reformation dito."[64]

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[60] Exactly what this means, we will attempt to explain in a later part of this chapter.

[61] M/E, Werke, VII, 351.

[62] Again, Engels fails to tell us how or why.

Engels was wrestling with a key problem here, but a problem of his own making. If, as he had had to admit in his Bauernkrieg, there had been only guild manufacturing in 16th-century Germany, and this had been lagging behind that of other countries, what could it have been that had made a bourgeois revolution possible, even if only in religious guise? The problem became all the more acute when Engels was forced to admit that the Hanseatic League had lost its power and prestige and that the center of trade had been taken from Germany. Either Engels would have to find another definition for the Reformation period or he would have to find more material support for his bourgeoisie and, hence, for his bourgeois revolution.

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[63] "Luther and Müntzer repräsentieren nach ihrer Doktrin wie nach ihrem Charakter und ihrem Auftreten jeder seine Partei vollständig." M/E, Werke, VII, 347.

[64] Zur deutschen Geschichte, p. 563.

It has been noted that Engels began to plan and work toward a revision of his Bauernkrieg in 1884. In a preliminary outline prepared in the same year, he delved a little into Germany's pre-Reformation history and pointed to the causes for Germany's ever-increasing political division.[65] But, he stated, Germany could have been united politically despite these divisive tendencies if her trade and commerce would have developed naturally since she was the center of world trade, since she had lost her French and Italian territories which just drained her money and manpower, and since she had succeeded in Germanizing her slavic inhabitants. Two decisive factors, however, had stepped in to hinder this. In the first place, the German bourgeoisie had made its revolution in the form of the Reformation because of the necessity at that time to express everything in religious form.[66] But the German bourgeoisie could not even produce its revolution in religious guise without the help of the knights and the peasants.[67] In the second place, Germany had lost her position as a world trading center and was forced off the main trade route; this, according to Engels, broke the power of the bourgeoisie, and also, consequently, of the Reformation.

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[65] Another reason why the bourgeois revolution had to fail!

[66] As we shall see later, however, the Marxists view the Renaissance, as Engels himself did (Introduction to "Dialectics of Nature"), as a secularizing movement. If this was so, and the Renaissance preceded the Reformation by at least one hundred years, why, then, did the German bourgeois revolution of necessity have to appear in a religious guise? Engels never answered the question.

Thus far, however, Engels remained with his contradiction between a lagging economy and sagging trade and the revolution of the bourgeoisie. In 1889, however, Karl Kautsky published a series of articles in Die Neue Zeit on "Die Bergarbeiter und der Bauernkrieg," trying to point out that: "No matter how highly one regards Münzer's personal importance [for the revolt in Thuringia], and one cannot readily over-emphasize it, the question still arises whether Münzer did not come to power in this area precisely because the miners stood behind him."[68] In these articles, Kautsky pointed out that the Saxon gold and silver mines were the most important ones in Europe at the time; the only others that came into consideration were those of Hungary. The other European countries produced relatively little gold and silver, and, until after the Peasant War of 1525, imports of precious metals from America had had no effect upon the European market.[69] Engels immediately grasped the significance of this fact for his interpretation of the Reformation. Writing to Kautsky on September 15, 1889, he stated:

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[67] Engels calls this revolution, ". . . aber wie lausig!" Quite clearly, Engels was angry with the bourgeoisie of 16th-century Germany because it did not have the revolutionary power and enthusiasm it should have had, yet, by Engels' own admission, it lacked a strong material basis. Zur deutschen Geschichte, p. 563.

[68] Karl Kautsky, "Die Bergarbeiter und der Bauernkrieg," Die Neue Zeit, VII (1889), 288-97, 337-50, 410-17, 443-53, and 507-15.

> . . . From your work, it has become very clear to me (something I had just vaguely grasped from my reading of Soetbeer), that the gold and silver production of Germany (and Hungary's, whose precious metals came to the West only via Germany) was the ultimately motivating factor which placed Germany at the peak of European countries economically between 1470-1530 and thus made it into the center of the first bourgeois revolution in religious guise, the so-called Reformation. It became the ultimate factor in the sense that it was added to the relatively high guild production and important trading position of Germany, and thus gave Germany the preeminence over Italy, France, and England.[70]

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[69] Ibid., p. 292.

[70] E/K, Briefwechsel, p. 247. Yet in a letter to Mehring of September 28, 1892, Engels spoke of the bourgeois revolution in Germany in the following terms: ". . . This is the point where I occasionally depart somewhat from your view, especially in the conception of the preliminary conditions for the dismemberment of Germany and of the failure of the bourgeois revolution in Germany during the 16th century . . . ." Correspondence, p. 543.

At last Engels had found the 'ultimately motivating factor' that had made Germany the center of the first bourgeois revolution. Engels appears like a drowning man clutching at a straw, but this straw was enough to appease his theoretical conscience. Yet, as before, he did not bring this new factor into any integral relationship to the rise of the bourgeoisie.

It was precisely this point Engels came back to once again in his last letter to Kautsky, after reading the latter's Vorläufer des neueren Sozialismus. Kautsky apparently had not learned from Engels' letter of 1889 that it had been Germany's total economic position which had made it possible for the Reformation to take place in Germany, for, Engels stated:

> 2. You have not grasped fully Germany's position in the world market—insofar as one can speak of this—of Germany's international economic position at the end of the XV's century. This position alone explains why the bourgeois-plebian movement in religious form, which had failed in England, the Netherlands, and Bohemia, could have a certain measure of success in Germany: the success in its religious guise, whereas the success of the bourgeois content was reserved for the following century and those countries which had meanwhile become the centers of world trade: Holland and England. That is a vast topic which I hope to deal with in extenso—if I ever get to it.[71]

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[71] Engels to Kautsky, May 21, 1895. Ibid., p. 435. On March 25, 1895, he had written Kautsky: "An diese Arbeit, auf die ich mich seit lange gefreut habe, gehe ich sobald ich irgend kann, und zwar sind noch (nur) einige kleine Arbeiten dazwischen, eigentlich bloss noch die Umarbeitung der Einleitung zur Neuauflage des Bauernkriegs (wozu ich auch Dein Buch brauche) . . . ." E/K, Briefwechsel, p. 426.

Thus it becomes clear that Engels' thesis is reduced to the following proposition: although Germany may have been less united politically and possessed industries less productive than other European countries, and had begun to lose its trading strength, yet the gold and silver mining industry had kept Germany at the peak of the European trading market, at least until 1530,[72] and had thus made possible the bourgeois revolution in religious guise. Engels here admitted that it had not even been the guild manufacturing centers which had empowered the bourgeoisie—Germany's international economic position alone explained the limited success of this revolution, a success which lay in its religious form. However, Engels did not live to deal with this vast topic in extenso or in any other form, for, within a short time he was dead and the planned revision of his Bauernkrieg was never realized. The legacy he left behind with regard to the Peasant War, however, was filled with problems of a very thorny nature.

In his book, Vorläufer des neueren Sozialismus, the book Engels criticized because it did not emphasize Germany's position in the world market, Kautsky pointed to the causes for unrest in Germany which he saw primarily in the economic realm. He pointed to an apparent contradiction, the contradiction that Germany was rich and yet complained most about the money being carried away to Rome. The contradiction was only apparent, however, because the richer one was the more it hurt to pay. Thus Kautsky saw Luther's attack on the indulgence traffic as one which assaulted the heart of the Church's fiscal system and, at the same time, attracted those who were hit hardest by this system because they hoped to free themselves from it.[73]

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[72] One has the distinct feeling that Engels did not care what happened after 1530, as long as he had an economic base, even if it was not the capitalist mode of production, upon which to place his revolution.

Yet Kautsky sought the particular reason for the beginning of the Reformation in the rise of the mining industry in Saxony, which, together with the increasing exchange of products, brought wealth to the region. It brought not only wealth, however, it also brought increased friction between the various classes, for the merchants, landlords, and nobles reaped all the profits. The increase in production and trade brought an increase in the cost of goods but did not bring financial gain to the peasants; and in the city it brought only more severe wage battles. Thus, class antagonisms became especially acute in Saxony.[74]

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[73] Kautsky, Vorläufer, pp. 7-9.

[74] Ibid., pp. 23-27.

The Saxon mines were under the control of the Dukes of Saxony and thus they reaped the lion's share of the profits. This was of special importance in the beginning of the exchange of products because it gave the dukes, particularly Frederick the Wise, a tremendous power at a time when the Electors of Germany were selling their votes to the highest royal bidder. Because of his wealth, Frederick became 'king maker' and the rallying point in Germany for the forces of princely Absolutism. When, therefore, Luther turned against the Church, Frederick the Wise was able to protect him.

Despite the fact, however, that Kautsky was more specific as to the material base of the original source of the Reformation,[75] Saxony, he still did not answer the essential question as to the relationship of Luther's ideas with the local social and economic conditions. There may be some truth in the supposition that the Duke of Saxony's financial power and consequent relative independence made it possible for him to protect Luther when the

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[74] Ibid., pp. 23-27.

[75] It is quite clear that Engels and Kautsky did not see the Reformation (and the Peasant War) on the same levels. Engels was trying to grasp it in its totality as an historical epoch whereas Kautsky was content to look at it more locally and as cause and effect. Thus, Engels' criticism of his book—that Kautsky had not grasped the total picture which alone explained the partial success of the German bourgeois revolution of the 16th century—was quite justified from Engels' point of view.

latter came into conflict with the Pope and Emperor, but it in no way answered why the Duke chose to do so, nor did it answer the far more important question concerning the relationship between the origin of Luther's thought and the rise of the bourgeoisie and of trade and commerce in Saxony.

With the beginning of Russian Marxist literature on the Reformation after World War II, Engels' thesis of the Reformation as the frühbürgerliche Revolution, together with its legacy of problems, was taken up again. Smirin, writing in Die Volksreformation des Thomas Münzer in 1947, repeated Engels' thesis in the early part of his book as well as later on in his chapter on Müntzer's social aims.[76] Some five years later, Smirin published a second book, on the political background of the Peasant War,[77] in which he was forced to some conclusions which were in fundamental contradiction to Engels' thesis, although he tried to maintain the validity of this thesis. But even Engels had already contradicted his own concept of a bourgeois revolution by admitting that the bourgeoisie as a class had not been revolutionary in 15th- and 16th-century Germany. Smirin was now forced to the same conclusion. In the third chapter of his second book, in which he sought to demonstrate the effect of the revolutionary Hussite propaganda on Germany, he had to admit time and again that the cities had feared revolution rather than welcomed it.[78] Yet, despite this, he tried to assert that there had been revolutionary elements among the German bourgeoisie.[79] The contradiction was all too obvious, however. Engels' theory had begun to run into factual opposition.

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[76] Smirin, Volksreformation, p. 5 and pp. 278-79.

[77] Smirin, Deutschland vor der Reformation.

It did not take too long after Khruhschev's denunciation of the Stalin era with its 'personality cult' at the Twentieth Party Congress, February, 1956, before the first critical voice was raised—that of a woman, Madame O.G. Chaikovskaia. She began her article in Voprosi Istorii[80] by stating that the thesis, which held that the Reformation was the first bourgeois revolution, not only contradicted a number of very specific, concrete Marxist historical studies, it also contained a number of internal contradictions.[81] But she herself was caught between the Scylla of Marxist theoretical orthodoxy and the Charybdis of historical evidence.

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[78] For example: ". . . In dem Schreiben wird die Befürchtung Ausdruck gegeben dass einzelne Schichten der Stadtbevölkerung und der Ritterschaft von der Bewegung angesteckt sein könnten. Gerade deshalb schlagen die Behörden von Ulm vor . . . so heisst es weiter in diesem Schreiben des Ulmer Rats, wir Städte, die zu dem heiligen Reich gehören, müssen diesen Aktionen im Interesse der Erhaltung aller höheren Schichten der Gesellschaft und im Interesse des Reichs Widerstand entgegensetzen. Zu diesem Zweck müssen wir uns mit dem herzoglichen Haus Württemberg verbinden und die Ritterschaft gewinnen . . . ." Ibid., p. 109. See also pp. 110-11.

[79] Ibid., p. 156, and again in his concluding chapter, pp. 374-80.

[80] O.G. Chaikovskaia, "Vopros o kharaktere Reformatsii i Krestianskoi voine v Germanii v sovietskoi istorigrafii poslednich let," Voprosi Istorii, 12 (1956), 129-43. (Hereafter this journal will be cited as VI.)

In order to avoid floundering on the rock of Marxist orthodoxy, Chaikovskaia had to point out that Engels had not distinguished clearly enough between _Bürgertum_, the class which rose to prominence on guild and handicraft production in the cities, and _Bourgeoisie_, the class that rose to power on the back of the capitalistic mode of production.[82] In this way she attempted to prepare her readers for the following conclusion: namely, that the Reformation and Peasant War were not, as Engels had asserted toward the end of his life, the 'bourgeois revolution No. I,' for they had taken place at a time when one could as yet only speak of a _bürgerlich_ class and not of a bourgeoisie.

She led up to the above conclusion by using Engels' own arguments contained in his _Bauernkrieg_. Here he had argued that Germany had been economically backward at the time of the Reformation when compared with countries like France and England.[83]

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[81] _Ibid_., p. 129.

[82] _Ibid_.

[83] _Ibid_., p. 130. See also the summary of Engels' view above, p. 242.

If this was true, then why should Germany produce a bourgeois revolution before these other countries?[84] Smirin had tried to solve the above problem by quoting the late Engels who, as has been noted, had asserted that Germany had been at the peak of European nations economically in the first part of the 16th century. Chaikovskaia, by attacking Smirin's point of view, thus also indirectly attacked Engels for his inconsistencies. However, she covered this attack by trying to negate the substance of Engels' latest utterances on the subject.[85] She then turned to Engels' Bauernkrieg; in it she found that Engels had indeed spoken of an economic upsurge in late 15th- and early 16th-century Germany. This was not due, however, to growing capitalistic production, but to a growing guild production. Yet even at that, Engels spoke so clearly of Germany's lagging behind the other European countries in its industrial production that no one could doubt what he had meant by this. Nor did he speak anywhere of capitalistic production in Germany at this time.[86]

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[84] Ibid., p. 131. ". . . In a word, the proponents of the above view will have to explain why, and upon what foundation the first bourgeois revolution took place in one of the backward, still strongly feudalized countries of Western Europe."

[85] ". . . This statement, which, incidentally, contradicts the utterances of Marx and Engels about the economic and political state of Germany quoted by Smirin elsewhere, proves nothing in this context . . . ." Ibid., p. 132.

Clearly, therefore, Engels had not thought of the events of 1525 as a bourgeois revolution. With the help of numerous citations from Engels' writings she then proceeded to demonstrate what Engels had really meant. Engels had never spoken of capitalistic production as such, and when he had spoken of it, it had been only of its beginnings; he had spoken only of guild production. Hence, Engels could not have meant a bourgeois revolution as the Russian Marxists had come to understand the term.[87] This, taken together with what he had really meant by the term Bürgertum, made it obvious that one could only speak of a revolt of the peasants and the pre-proletariat, together with a few Bürger, against feudalism. The Reformation era had, therefore, not experienced a bourgeois revolution.[88]

In coming to the above conclusion, Chaikovskaia made use of many local studies, mostly in the form of dissertations, which attempted to come to grips with the historical evidence.[89] She even went so far as to say: "The problems raised by us can only be solved by means of research dealing with concrete examples . . . ."[90] But when she attempted to do just that with the concrete studies at her disposal, she had to interpret Engels' theory differently from the rest of her colleagues in order to make it fit the facts.

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[86] Ibid., pp. 133-34.

[87] Ibid., p. 137.

[88] Ibid., pp. 142-43.

[89] Ibid., see particularly pp. 137-42.

In her article, Chaikovskaia had pointed to a number of discrepancies she felt existed in Smirin's books and articles. It was little wonder, then, that Smirin should be the first to answer the charges.[91] In characteristic Marxist fashion, Smirin began with a documentation of the thesis of the Reformation as the first act of the bourgeois revolution from the writings of Engels.[92] Since Engels had emphasized the key role of the mining industry in his letters of September 15, 1889, and of May 21, 1895, to Kautsky, Smirin felt called upon to discuss at length the growth of this industry, but from very limited sources. Nevertheless, Smirin believed he could detect certain capitalistic elements in the mining industry.[93] He then attempted to prove that the same was true of the textile industry. At last he came to the central problem: the revolutionary or non-revolutionary character of the 16th-century German bourgeoisie. From a few documents and a few isolated examples he tried to prove that this bourgeoisie had indeed been revolutionary.[94]

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[90] Ibid., p. 138.

[91] M.M. Smirin, "O kharaktere ekonomicheskogo podiema i revolutionnogo dvishenia v Germanii v epochu Reformatsii," VI, 6 (1957), 84-101.

[92] This took up the first three pages.

Smirin concluded his article with a characteristic Marxist question: in what sense had Engels understood the term _bürgerliche Revolution_? He did not give a straightforward answer, however, for he answered by explaining what Chaikovskaia had meant by it! "If one follows the author's train of thoughts, one can readily come to the conclusion that Engels understood the term 'bürgerliche Revolution' as a definition for the reactionary movement which attempted to retain guild manufacturing. Such an unreasonable conclusion can be reached if one follows the reasoning of O.G. Chaikovskaia."[95] After all was said and done, however, Smirin had said much but proven very little.

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[93] He had three prime sources: Peter Albinus' _Meissner Berg Chronica_, Agricola's _De Re Metallica_, and the sermons of Johannes Mathesius. It was pointed out in the later articles, however, that nothing could be proven from such limited sources.

[94] Here again, later Russian articles on the subject pointed out that Smirin's evidence was in no way convincing.

[95] _Ibid_., p. 100.

Smirin was followed, in the next number of Voprosi Istorii, by A.D. Epstein.[96] Epstein rejected Chaikovskaia's criticism of Engels' interpretation and declared himself in agreement with Smirin's defence of it, but, he stated, Smirin had not supported his thesis as comprehensively as he might have. Two things were needed for a clear understanding of this exceedingly difficult period: one, a very clear understanding of the views of the Marxist Classics; two, lucid generalizations from the historical facts.[97] Consequently, Epstein also began with a documentation of Engels' utterances as to the nature of the 16th-century German conflict. Chaikovskaia, said Epstein, had rejected Engels' last statements on this problem; Smirin, however, had tried to counter this position by emphasizing those statements of Engels which tended to deny his earlier conception. But Smirin had not explained these 'apparent' contradictions and thus his reasoning had not been convincing.[98] Chaikovskaia had further stated that she would admit the possibility of a bourgeois revolution in 16th-century Germany only if a rapid increase in capitalistic manufacture could be proven and the reasons for this clearly explained. This, continued Epstein, had already been proven; one had only to read the more than one hundred monographs and some forty source publications of bourgeois German historians to be convinced of this.[99]

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[96] A.D. Epstein, "K voprosu o Reformatsii i Krestianskoi voine v Germanii kak piervoi bourgeoisoi revolutsii," VI, 8 (1957), 118-42.

[97] Ibid., p. 119. Epstein obviously believed the one could be harmonized with the other in one way or another.

[98] Ibid., p. 122.

Epstein stressed the fact that Engels had seen the bourgeois revolution in three stages, the first of which had taken place in Germany during the period of the Reformation. Obviously, Engels had been attempting to emphasize the various levels of development of these three revolutions. The differences between the three levels were in fact so great that if one were to compare them, there would be greater differences than similarities between them. One major difference between the German bourgeoisie of the 16th century and the bourgeoisie of the 17th-century English revolution was that the former had not played a leading role in the German bourgeois revolution![100] Not only had it not played a leading role, however, according to Engels, it had even actively opposed the popular masses and taken sides with the princes.[101]

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[99] Ibid. It is significant that Epstein had to prepare the ground for this statement. He did this by saying that Marx and Engels had always made use of 'bourgeois studies'; all one needed to do was to evaluate critically their conclusions! He then proceeded to criticize Chaikovskaia for not using them. But if, as Chaikovskaia had said, she had based her arguments on the Marxist historiography on the subject, then, according to Epstein, Marxist historiography was wrong in this case.

[100] Ibid., p. 125. He accused Smirin for being unclear on this point and for contradicting himself too often.

Against Smirin and in agreement with Chaikovskaia, Epstein asserted it had been perfectly clear to Marx and Engels that one could not speak of a bourgeois class in 16th-century Germany; not until the 19th century could one speak of such a class. In 1847 already, Engels had spoken of the absence of a bourgeois class in 16th-century Germany, yet despite this fact, he had never wavered in the belief that the Peasant War and the Reformation had constituted the first act of the bourgeois revolution. Epstein then comes to the profound, but nonetheless logical conclusion, that Engels had treated the events in Reformation Germany as a bourgeois revolution without a bourgeoisie![102]

Such a statement, needless to say, needed explaining, and Epstein hurried to do so. Marx and Engels, he said, had never and would never have called the Bürger class of the 14th to 16th centuries a bourgeoisie. He tried to point out that the difference between Bürger and Bourgeoisie had been obliterated to a large extent in the translation of Marx and Engels' works from German to Russian.[103] By means of a number of examples, Epstein demonstrated how the Russian translators had even spoken of a revolutionary city bourgeoisie in the Middle Ages! This could certainly never have been the sense in which Marx and Engels had used the terms. As a matter of fact, already in 1847 Engels had spoken of a Kleinbürgertum as opposed to a bourgeoisie in the late Middle Ages, but the Russian translator had rendered this as Kleinbourgeoisie. The Bürger, of course, had only been city dwellers and not a bourgeoisie in possession of a nascent capitalistic industry.

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[101] Ibid., pp. 126-27. On this point Epstein openly agreed with Chaikovskaia.

[102] Ibid., p. 127. Epstein stated that if one were to give up the term of bourgeois revolution for the Reformation, one would also have to give up all the scientific and political conclusions a concept of this nature supplied! A good reason indeed.

Epstein was forced to point out, however, that Engels, at various times in his life, had held three different views of Germany's economic position at the time of the Reformation: in 1850 he had spoken of a backwardness of the German economy; in 1873 he had spoken of an economy that had stood at the European peak; and toward the end of his life, he had spoken of an economy that had taken up a leading position in Europe.[104] He then proceeded to demonstrate that Germany's economy had indeed been in the lead at that time, primarily because of its trade and commerce, however, not because of any beginnings of capitalistic manufacturing industries.[105] Nevertheless, capitalism had begun at this time but was as yet controlled by the great monopolies. The owners of the monopolies were the truly progressive party of the time, but these were offset by the reactionary city Bürger who aimed more at becoming like the nobility than becoming revolutionary.[106] It was the clash between these two parties, Epstein believed, which offered the solution to the problem of a bourgeois revolution without a bourgeoisie.

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[103] Ibid., pp. 128-30. Chaikovskaia had placed the blame for the ambiguity on Engels' use of the terms; Epstein avoided this by placing the blame on the translators.

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[104] Epstein explains Engels' changing views as resulting from the publication of new sources by German bourgeois historians! If this were so, Engels would certainly have pointed these out to Kautsky in his letters of September 15, 1889, and May 21, 1895. He did not do this, however, and it is very doubtful whether he was even aware of these; at least nothing in his letters would lead us to believe so. Quite to the contrary, Engels' study habits were always superficial, as he admitted to Laura Lafargue in a letter of 1891. See above, p. 65.

[105] Ibid., pp. 139-40.

[106] Ibid., p. 142. He bases this argument on Alfred von Martin's Soziologie der Renaissance which had pointed to the aspirations of the burghers to move up into the ranks of the nobility.

Epstein was very unclear as to exactly what the consequence of all this was, however, for he went on to state that the conflict in 16th-century Germany was essentially the tail end of a two-hundred-year-old battle, whose form had changed somewhat, but whose participants had remained the same.[107] Thus, it would seem that he did not really believe the Reformation to be the first stage in the bourgeois revolution after all, but, rather the last act of a Medieval struggle.

In a fourth article, also dedicated to the question of the German economy and its effect upon the social structure during the time of the Reformation, J.M. Grugorian set out to prove that the great progress achieved in the mining industry had been brought about by the new capitalistic approach to industry.[108] But, he added, it would be wrong to assume that the total results achieved by the mining industry of 15th- and 16th-century Germany had been the result of capitalistic innovations, as Smirin seemed to indicate. This also seemed to be true of the other branches of industry. However, beside these larger, somewhat capitalistic industries, there existed many smaller ones which had not been run on a capitalistic basis.[109]

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[107] *Ibid*.

[108] J.M. Grugorian, "K voprosu o ûrovne ekonomiki, o kharaktere Reformatsii i Krestianskoi voine v Germanii," *VI*, 1 (1958), 123-39.

[109] *Ibid*., pp. 132-33.

Nor was it correct, as Smirin had further stated, that Germany had been at the peak of the European economy because her economy had shown the most distinct capitalistic tendencies. Other European countries had certainly manifested these as well. The reasons for her leading position had to be sought much more in her natural products, her money, and her abundance of labor. These factors had led to a faster development of the capitalistic tendencies in Germany.[110]

Like all the rest, Grugorian then proceeded to the Marxist question of questions: could one speak of a bourgeois class at the end of the 15th century in Germany? He answered with an emphatic no. Only in 19th-century Germany could one speak of a bourgeois class as such; in the 16th century it had only been coming into being.[111] It was further obvious that the power behind the popular movement of 1525 had been the peasants and the pre-proletariat.[112] However, the bourgeoisie had played the key role in the revolt since it had been their decision that had decided the outcome of the struggle. Because this bourgeoisie, or at least the owners of the mines in Germany, had not cared to revolt, for its interests had still been strongly intertwined with the interests of feudalism, the revolt had to fail.[113] Thus Grugorian had to come to the conclusion that Engels had not meant to call the Reformation in Germany a bourgeois revolution in the full sense of the term. It was a revolution only in the beginning stages of capitalism and, hence, the bourgeoisie had been underdeveloped as a class and divided in its interests.

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[110] *Ibid*., pp. 133-34.

[111] *Ibid*., pp. 134-35.

[112] Grugorian bases this argument on Engels' criticism of Lassalle's drama, *Franz von Sickingen*. See my "Thomas Müntzer in Marxist Thought," p. 310.

The argument over the nature of the Reformation period continued on, however, with Joseph Macek, the Czech historian, being the next to take up pen in defence of Engels.[114] Macek asserted that Chaikovskaia's thesis tended to portray the Peasant War merely as a peasant war in the period of nascent capitalism. This thesis would never do, however, for it stood in direct contradiction to the most recent historical research, created confusion in the Marxist ranks, and, most significantly, stood in blatant contradiction to the Marxist understanding of the historical role of the bourgeois revolution![115] But although Macek went on to criticize Chaikovskaia for some seven pages, he did not elaborate on this historical role.

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[113] Grugorian, op.cit., pp. 136-37.

[114] Joseph Macek, "K diskuissi o kharaktere Reformatsii i Krestianskoi voine v Germanii," VI, 3 (1958), 114-21.

The last of the Slavic Sextet to enter the historical fray was S.M. Stam[116] whom Chaikovskaia had accused of oversimplifying and of not proving the above thesis.[117] Stam believed he could point not only to the beginnings of capitalistic development in Germany at this time, but also to the fact that this development had raised a whole host of economic and social frictions which had not been present in the other countries. He saw the reason for the bourgeois revolution, which, he admitted, had really come too early, precisely in this friction. It was quite correct, he continued, the bourgeoisie had as yet not been 'ripe' enough to play the leading role in the revolution; but with the revolt of the peasants it was given the opportunity to join the revolutionary movement and to help in the revolutionary reconstruction of the country.[118] Although Stam did his utmost to demonstrate that there had been revolutionary elements in the 16th-century German bourgeoisie, yet he had to conclude that the greater part had not recognized its duty! And even those who had recognized it had hoped to achieve their goal, not together with the peasants, but at the expense of the peasants.[119]

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[115] *Ibid*., p. 114. This, of course, is one of the central problems. The Marxists have set up a certain role the bourgeoisie must play in the historical dialectic. This role is to revolt when the time is ripe. But, was the time ripe in 16th-century Germany?

[116] S.M. Stam, "Chem zhe v Deistvitelnosti bila Reformatsia v Germanii?" *VI*, 4 (1958), 100-13.

[117] Chaikovskaia, *op. cit*., p. 130.

From Russia, the discussion moved to Germany. Historians in East Germany had been somewhat slow to answer the call of Walter Ulbricht and Leo Stern for a revision of German history as issued in 1952,[120] and, except for some isolated studies, nothing was really done until Max Steinmetz opened the discussion with thirty-five theses on the nature of the frühbürgerliche Revolution in Germany.[121] A year after the publication of the theses, a collection of essays—the result of a historical congress at Wernigerode—were published on various aspects of the problem.[122]

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[118] Stam, op. cit., p. 102.

[119] Ibid., p. 104. Stam, like other Marxists, first determined the duty of the bourgeoisie according to Marxist theory, then condemned it if it did not fulfill this duty. In the meantime, however, he had stated that the 16th-century German bourgeoisie had not yet formed a class and hence their action was understandable. This did not stop him, however, from joining Lenin in condemnation of their action, whom he quoted as saying that the aim of the bourgeoisie was rooted in its class interests ". . . to end the bourgeois revolution half way, with only half freedom, with a business arrangement with the old powers and the landlords." But if this were so, then why cry when they did this, or demand that they rise in total revolt against their masters, or accuse them of not fulfilling their duty as Stam does on page 107?

In his introductory essay to the problem of the frühbürgerliche Revolution in Germany, Steinmetz demonstrated his orthodoxy in characteristic manner; he determined the causes for the failure of the revolution by asking why the bourgeoisie had not lived up to the role it should have played in a bourgeois revolution. The great task that had faced all 'progressive' forces of 15th-century Germany had been the task of creating a united Germany and of destroying everything that stood in the way of this goal. This meant that the bourgeoisie should have destroyed an anchronistic feudalism which stood in the way of a developing capitalism and, since the Roman Catholic Church had been the ideological exponent of feudalism, its power had to be destroyed first.[123] In order to do this, the bourgeoisie should have made common cause against feudalism with all other forces of opposition, expecially with the revolutionary peasants and pre-proletariat.[124] The destruction of the power of the Roman Catholic Church was indeed partially achieved by Luther, the ideological representative of the bourgeois class,[125] but the 'real' feudalism remained undestroyed because the bourgeoisie failed to join the forces of opposition and lead them to victory.[126]

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[120] See Jürgen von Hehn, "Die Sowjetisierung des Geschichstbildes in Mitteldeutschland," Europa Archiv, 9 (1954), 6929-38 and 6973-77. See especially Leo Stern's speech laying down guidelines for such a revision.

[121] ZfG, I (1960), 114-24. In the opening paragraphs Steinmetz complained that not a single East German historian had joined in the discussion initiated by the Russians.

[122] Gerhard Brendler, ed., Die frühbürgerliche Revolution in Deutschland (Berlin, 1961).

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[123] Max Steinmetz, "Probleme der frühbürgerliche Revolution," Frühbürgerliche Revolution, p. 42.

[124] Ibid., p. 46.

[125] Ibid., p. 44.

Several other essays in the same volume were also dedicated to the problems raised by the concept of the early bourgeois revolution. In one of these, Karlheinz Blaschke attempted to demonstrate that Germany's political particularism in the 15th and 16th centuries had not led to economic particularism; rather, the economy had been very much intertwined and interdependent. In fact, the tension created by an interdependent economy and political particularism had added to the friction already existing in Germany.[127] In another, Gerhardt Heitz pointed to the distintegration of guild production brought about by a system whereby peasants were used to produce the finished product from raw materials farmed out to them.[128] In still another, Eckhard Müller-Mertens blamed the failure of the German bourgeois revolution on the absence of a king in Germany with whom the bourgeoisie could make common cause against the powers of feudalism.[129] And in a fourth article, Ingrid Mittenzwei pointed out that the Soviet discussion on the topic had shown that 16th-century Germany had not had a bourgeois class. If this were true, however, could a bourgeois revolution have taken place? In order to be able to answer this question one had first to point out that the absence of a bourgeois class did not preclude the rise of capitalism. To the extent that Germany had developed a capitalistic mode of production, to the same extent the seeds of a bourgeois class were present. But, even if only the seeds of a bourgeois class were present, one had to remember that the bourgeoisie could never achieve as profound an understanding of its historic role as the proletariat because it had not discovered the scientific laws of history![130]

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[126] Ibid., p. 47. Steinmetz stated: ". . . Die wirtschaftliche und politische Stellung gerade des städtischen Patriziats war ohne die kaiserliche Privilegierung nicht denkbar: und das Bürgertum in seiner patrizischen Spitze war nicht bereit, eine echte Bourgeoisie zu werden, so wenig die mittlere Schicht bereit war, mit den Plebejern auch nur einen Schritt gemeinsam weiterzugehen über die Erreichung der eigenen kleinlichen Ziele hinaus." Having determined that the bourgeoisie did not play the role it should have according to Marxist theory, Steinmetz has to come to the conclusion that it had not recognized its own interests, and that the interests it did in fact pursue were not its 'true' interests.

[127] Karlheinz Blaschke, "Deutsche Wirtschaftseinheit oder Wirtschaftspartikularismus?" Ibid., pp. 52-58.

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[128] Gerhard Heitz, "Zu einigen wirtschaftlichen Fragen der frühbürgerlichen Revolution in Deutschland und die Rolle des Königtums," ibid., pp. 59-63. This practice was called the "putting-out system" by Clough and Cole, Economic History of Europe (Boston, 1952), p. 224.

[129] Eckhard Müller-Mertens, "Zu den Aufgaben der frühbürgerlichen Revolution in Deutschland und die Rolle des Königtums," ibid., pp. 81-90.

Smirin, however, attempted to have the last word in the matter. Commenting on the essays contained in Die frühbürgerliche Revolution in Deutschland, he concluded by stating that the Marxists would have to free themselves from several traditionally accepted theories: first, that Germany in the 16th century had been an economically backward country; and, secondly, that the whole of the Bürgerklasse had been a traitorous class. Then, with a few remarks on research still to be done, Smirin attempted to close the discussion.[131]

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[130] Ingrid Mittenzwei, "Bemerkingen zum Charakter von Reformation und Bauernkrieg in Deutschland," ibid., pp. 101-107. There is a very fine contradiction in this last statement, for, if a class has to recognize the role it is to play through an understanding of the scientific laws then what role does the 'ultimately motivating economic factor' play? And if it is our understanding of the scientific laws of history that determines our actions, then we are not motivated by economic factors at all, but by our rational faculty. The Marxists, of course, want to have their cake and eat it too: all other classes are motivated by ultimately economic factors, only the proletariat is not so motivated.

[131] M.M. Smirin, "Zu einigen Fragen der Geschichte der deutschen Reformation," La Renaissance et la Reformation en Pologne et en Hongrie (Budapest, 1963), eds. Gy. Szekely and E. Fugedi, pp. 211-33.

The discussion would not remain closed, however. In 1952 Joseph Macek published a book on the Hussite Revolution[132] in which he attempted to place this revolution on a par with the German Peasant War. In 1954 the book was translated into the Russian, but the editors were careful to note in the introduction that Macek's view was not the correct one;[133] the Hussite Revolution could not be considered an early form of the bourgeois revolution. In 1961 the same topic was approached from the philosophical side by the Czeck, Robert Kalivoda. In his lengthy introductory background to the movement, Kalivoda traced the economic conditions of the time. More in accordance with the non-Marxist approach to the problem, Kalivoda pointed to the commercial capitalism of the 14th to the 16th century as the disintegrating force of the time, not to productive capitalism as the Russian and German Marxists had tried to prove. Productive capitalism had at the most only been present in isolated instances.[134] Since Kalivoda chose to make commercial capitalism instead of productive capitalism responsible for the disintegration of feudalism, and since commercial capitalism had obviously been present in Czechoslovakia from the 14th to the 16th century, the Hussite Revolution had to be considered the first of the early bourgeois revolutions.

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[132] J. Macek, Husitské revolucni hnuti (Praha, 1952).

[133] Bernhard Töpfer, "Fragen der hussitischen revolutionären Bewegung," ZfG, 11 (1963), i, 149.

[134] Ibid., p. 146.

No notice was taken of Kalivoda's book in the discussion concerning the nature of the frühbürgerliche Revolution until Bernhard Töpfer discussed it in an article entitled, "Questions concerning the Hussite revolutionary Movement."[135] In a critical comment on Smirin's article in Voprosi Istorii regarding the presence of productive capitalism in Germany in the 16th century, Töpfer remarked that although it was important to analyse the economic structure of a period in order to place that period into its historical context, yet one could not make the characterization of a given epoch dependent upon the economic factor alone. Important for the characterization of a period were also the historical events themselves, the conscious or unconscious aims of the movement, and the social classes participating in the events. If one approached the problem from this perspective, then one would have to agree with the Czechoslovakian historians that the Hussite Revolution was indeed on a level with the German Peasant War. Therefore, if the latter was to be classified as a frühbürgerliche Revolution, then so must the Hussite Revolution be.[136]

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[135] See above, n. 133.

In spite of the fact that Töpfer admitted the presence in isolated instances of productive capitalism and, consequently, the beginnings of a modern bourgeoisie, he argued that this bourgeoisie had not been strong or coherent enough to form a class that could even have played a supporting role in the peasant struggle. Töpfer was, therefore, one with Epstein who had called the Peasant War a frühbürgerliche Revolution without a bourgeoisie.[137] The 'aim' of the revolution should have been to form a unified state as an increasing number of German Marxist historians had been pointing out and this in itself justified one in speaking of a frühbürgerliche Revolution. Therefore the 'aim' of the Peasant War had not been the destruction of feudalism as such, much rather it had been the creation within feudalism of a more propitious foundation upon which productive capitalism could arise.[138]

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[136] Ibid., pp. 149-50.

[137] Ibid., p. 450.

[138] Ibid., p. 451.

Töpfer's article brought the topic of the nature of the frühbürgerliche Revolution up for discussion once more. A year later he was answered by Zschäbitz.[139] More and more the dogmatic position regarding productive capitalism was dropped, for Zschäbitz admitted that the commercial capitalists of the 16th century had only invested their money in productive capitalistic ventures with reluctance and had turned into a true bourgeoisie very slowly. Many ties still bound them too closely to feudalism.[140] But then, as in the Peasant War, the lower classes had always been the carriers of revolution and these had been fighting against four major aspects of feudalism: firstly, against the Roman Catholic Church, the mother of reaction; secondly, in the cities the bourgeoisie fought against the patrician privileged classes; thirdly, on the land the peasants fought against feudal bondage; and lastly, the masses did not recognize clearly enough that the princes had to be destroyed, only Müntzer had recognized this and had called to battle against the princes. Thus Müntzer had demonstrated not only the greatest insight into the historical dialectic of his time, but he had also developed the best program to meet the national German and historical needs.[141]

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[139] Gerhard Zschäbitz, "Über den Charakter und die historischen Aufgaben von Reformation und Bauernkrieg," ZfG, 12 (1964), 2, 177-88.

[140] Ibid., p. 281.

[141] Ibid., p. 285.

He turned against Töpfer, however, who had argued against the early bourgeois nature of the revolution, giving the following reasons for his disagreement: the total movement, stated Zschäbitz, in its 'objective' duty and in its 'subjective' aims, had aimed at the destruction of the hindrances feudalism was placing in the way of the development of early capitalism. Furthermore, the movement had grown out of a social structure which had contained the seeds of the later capitalistic social structure in it and had passed through phases similar to other bourgeois revolutions. Lastly, the Peasant War had been an early form of the bourgeois revolution because in those regions where the peasants and plebians had gained temporary control of government they had initiated measures which would have resulted in a more rapid development of capitalism had these measures not been repealed after the defeat of the peasants.[142] It was further obvious to Zschäbitz that capitalistic production had been present in 16th-century Germany but had been absent in Bohemia at the time of the Hussite Revolution.[143]

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[142] *Ibid.*, p. 287.

[143] *Ibid.*

In 1965 Steinmetz came back to the problem as well.[144] Once again he made the point, in opposition to Töpfer, that the decisive element in the discussion of the problem was the degree of development capitalistic production had reached in the two countries. Progress in the discussion of the problem would not be achieved by pitting example against example; the problem had to be seen in its European context and in the context of the transition from the medieval to the modern era. In medieval times, continued Steinmetz, one could speak only of nascent capitalistic production; with the 15th century, however, one was forced to speak of the presence of capitalistic production on a broad scale and as a European phenomenon. The appearance of capitalism and of a bourgeoisie was the new, the important, and in the final analysis, the decisive element at work.

In the process of arguing his case, Steinmetz gives a classic example of Marxist aprioristic reasoning. He begins by stating that the total tendency during this period is bourgeois. This is so because every revolutionary movement must of necessity become a bourgeois revolution in this stage of development because it is the only possible revolutionary solution under the conditions of emerging capitalism. Therefore, he must continue to argue that, 'objectively,' the Reformation was directed against feudalism even if only against its ideological exponent at first, the Roman Catholic Church. By attacking the Church, the Reformation attacked the ecclesiastical princes and, by so doing, also essentially attacked the secular princely prerogatives as well. The intellectual carriers of Reformation thought had been drawn from the bourgeoisie and had found their chief support in the cities, all their programs of reform had been ultimately directed against feudalism, and it was in their interests that the feudal restrictions were to be destroyed. He had to admit, however, and this admission was in essence a contradiction of what he had just said, that this bourgeois revolution had been made only in the interest of the bourgeoisie but with only very little actual support, not to speak of bourgeois leadership. On the basis of this contradiction, however, he could go on to make Thomas Müntzer and Michael Gaismaier, the leaders of the revolutionary masses, the real carriers of the bourgeois revolution only few bourgeoisie wanted or participated in.[146] Such argumentation was the easier since Steinmetz cited only Marxist literature on the topic.

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[144] Max Steinmetz, "Über den Charakter der Reformation und des Bauernkrieges in Deutschland," Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Karl Marx Universität. Gesellschafts- und Sprachwissenschaftliche Reihe, 14 (1965), 3, 389-96. (Hereafter this journal will be cited as WZdKMU.)

[145] Ibid., p. 393.

We have dealt with the above problem at such length because it is a classic example of the difficulties the Marxists encounter when they try to solve the contradictions between the historical events of a given period in question and the stringent demands of theoretical orthodoxy, contradictions, be it said here, they have brought upon themselves. They have evolved a theory to explain the events of history, but rather than explain, the theory confuses. Not only does it confuse, however, it hinders more than it explains history. On the one hand, the Marxists take great pains to try to determine the precise meaning of Engels—this demonstrates their dependence upon theory. On the other hand, however, they also concern themselves with the concrete historical reality, with the historical facts. But from these facts they try to distill general truths which will agree with their theory. The Marxists are, therefore, caught between history as it should be according to their theory and as it actually is without their theory. The compromise product which is the end result of their process of distillation, however, does not explain the period in question; much rather it is an attempt to harmonize the theory with the facts. But in the process of harmonization either the theory or the facts must be tampered with. Thus, for example, the attempt of Chaikovskaia, and also to a certain degree of Epstein, to change Engels' theory in order to bring it into harmony with the facts was nearly unanimously rejected. Rather than reject Engels' theory of the Reformation as the 'Bourgeois Revolution No. I,' most Marxists would rather accept the contradiction that this bourgeois revolution had been brought about by a bourgeoisie that was reactionary—if one could speak of a bourgeoisie at all. Thus have the Marxists been hoisted with their own petard.

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[146] *Ibid*., p. 394.

Yet there is another aspect to the problem. It has been noted that Marx and Engels had evolved certain sociological categories by means of which they analyzed society and also history. Any sociological analysis, however, tends to disregard historical continuity, for it lifts specific periods or events out of their historical context for study. Furthermore, a sociological analysis tends to create 'ideal types' by means of which to catalogue people and events, but no two people or events are alike. Marx and Engels, too, had created their ideal types: the class revolution, the bourgeois and the proletarian classes, the various economic modes of production, and the like. One of the problems faced by the Marxist historians in the above instance was obviously that they could not place the Peasant War and Reformation into the classic Marxist example of the bourgeois revolution, yet Engels' had called the Reformation exactly that; another was that the bourgeoisie did not act the way the Marxist ideal type should have acted. Thus the sociological categories, together with the Marxist theory of history, have created more problems than they have solved, they have confused rather than clarified.

The Marxist system is more, however, than a mere means by which to analyse society: it is also a behavioral science which explains the thoughts and actions not only of men, but also of whole societies. It has the answer to the epistemological problem. Thus, it does not take too much insight into the history of Germany in the 15th and 16th centuries to note that during this time three momentous changes took place. In the first place capitalism began to come into existence as the new mode of production. Secondly, as a result of the capitalistic mode of production the bourgeoisie slowly came to power. And, thirdly, this new class had to develop its own ideology—in Germany this took on the form of Lutheranism.[147]

C. Protestantism as Ideological Superstructure

Engels had arrived at the above theoretical conclusion from his materialistic epistemological position. He now turned to the history of the Reformation period in order to verify his theory. It must be noted at the outset, however, that Engels probably knew very little more about Luther than he had read in Zimmermann's Bauernkrieg.[148]

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[147] In his Bauernkrieg, p. 347, Engels stated: "Während sich in dem ersten der drei grossen Lager, im konservativ-katholischen, alle Elemente zusammenfanden, die an der Erhaltung des Bestehenden interessiert waren . . . sammeln sich um das Banner der bürgerlich-gemässigten lutherischen Reform die besitzenden Elemente der Opposition, die Masse des niederen Adels, die Bürgerschaft und selbst ein Teil der weltlichen Fürsten . . . ." And Marx stated in Das Kapital: "Für eine Gesellschaft von Warenproduzenten, deren Allgemein gesellschaftliches Produktionsverhältnis darin besteht, sich zu ihren Produkten als Waren also als Werten zu verhalten, und in dieser sachlichen Form ihre Privatarbeiten aufeinander zu beziehn als gleich menschliche Arbeit, ist das Christentum, mit seinem Kultus des abstrakten Menschen, namentlich in seiner bürgerlichen Entwicklung, dem Protestantismus, Deismus usw., die entsprechende Religionsform." M/E, Werke, XXIII, 93.

[148] On February 1, 1892, Engels wrote to Kautsky: "Es ist mir dieser Tage eingefallen, dass eine Darstellung Luthers aus seinen Thaten und Schriften eine sehr nöthige Arbeit wäre . . . ." E/K, Briefwechsel, p. 328.

But, not even Zimmermann had understood Luther correctly, for he had seen Luther's teachings only from the point of view of their social and political consequences, not in their pristine purity. Hence, since Engels could not deal with the problem concretely, he had to deal with it in generalities. However, by dealing with it in generalities, he also avoided confronting his theory with the stubborn facts of history.

During the transition from Antiquity to the Middle Ages, Engels began in his Bauernkrieg, the only thing that survived had been Christianity. The result was, as in all emerging societies, that the priests gained the monopoly over things intellectual whereby the various branches of learning became mere extensions of theology. This preponderance of theology in the realm of the intellectual was the necessary consequence of the Church's position as ideological exponent and sanction of feudalism. Therefore, it was clear that any attack against feudalism would first of all have to take the form of an attack against the Church. As a result of this reasoning, therefore, since Luther's teachings attacked the Church, they were also an attack on feudalism.[149]

Thus Luther essentially attacked feudalism, and the Church merely because it was the ideological exponent and sanction of feudalism. But how did Engels reach the conclusion that Lutheranism had been the ideology of the bourgeoisie? Engels did not give an answer to this question in his Bauernkrieg, but he came back to the problem in 1886, in "Ludwig Feuerbach." Since all forms of ideology, such as philosophy, politics, and jurisprudence, had been subdivisions of theology in the Middle Ages, every social and political protest or reform movement had had to take on a religious form. From the beginning of their existence, Engels continued, the burghers had brought forth, as an appendage, propertyless urban plebians, day laborers and the like, a class that had belonged to no Estate at the time. As a result, ". . . heresy soon became divided into a burgher—moderate heresy and a plebian—revolutionary one, the latter an abomination to the burgher heretics themselves."[150]

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[149] Much the same reasoning is used by Engels in his 1892 Introduction to "Socialism: Utopian and Scientific:" "But the great international centre of feudalism was the Roman Catholic Church. It united the whole of feudalized Western Europe, in spite of all internal wars [my italics], into one grand political system, opposed as much to the schismatic Greeks as to the Mohammedan countries. It surrounded feudal institutions with the halo of divine consecration. It had organized its own hierarchy on the feudal model, and, lastly, it was itself by far the most powerful feudal lord, holding, as it did, fully one-third of the soil of the Catholic world. Before profane feudalism could be successfully attacked in each country and in detail, this, its sacred central organization, had to be destroyed." On Religion, p. 299.

Thus it becomes clear that Engels viewed the process whereby ideas are born only from one side: from the point of view of social stratas or social classes. Now, it is quite correct, and not to be denied, that ideas are modified when they are brought down and absorbed or appropriated by various social classes. But ideas have to originate somewhere, and here it becomes very significant that Engels knew nothing about the genesis of Luther's thought, or of the genesis of the heresies of the Middle Ages: he saw only how the ideas were appropriated by the masses and this, together with his epistemological position, forced him to assume that ideas were the expression of the social and economic conditions of the time. If ideas were born in this manner in society, they must be born in the same way in the mind of the individual, just here Engels was unable to determine the economic motivation, so he simply stated that the individual had been unaware of the sociological factors determining his thought. He realized his error toward the end of his life, however, and then he was forced to admit that both he and

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[150] Ibid., pp. 264-65.

Marx had forgotten the formal side of the problem, the dependence upon intellectual traditions or schools of thought.[151] The one time he did try to trace the beginning of an intellectual tradition, Christianity, he was forced to admit that it had originated from ideas current at the time. The most he could do was to attempt to demonstrate how Christianity had been modified by the economic, social, and other circumstances in its historical development.[152]

According to Engels, therefore, the moderate heresy was the heresy of the burghers.[153] Needless to say, then, Luther, whose heresy was more moderate than that of a Müntzer according to Engels, had to become the exponent of a burgher heresy. Therefore he could state, in his Bauernkrieg, that, ". . . Luther and Müntzer each represented[ed] their party completely in their doctrine, character, and actions."[154] Once Luther had given expression to this burgher ideology, the corresponding social classes—". . . the property-owning element of the opposition, the great majority of the lesser nobility, the burghers, and even a portion of the secular princes[!] . . ."[155] —could rally to the bourgeois Lutheran cause. Yet, the groups that eventually rallied to Luther's support were not quite as homogeneous as Engels might have wished!

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[151] See above, Chapter I, pp. 40-42.

[152] See above, Chapter III, pp. 85-95.

[153] The burghers were to be the revolutionary class at this time, however. But they were not, hence their ideology had to be a moderate one.

[154] Engels, "Bauernkrieg," M/E, Werke, VII, 347.

It seems, however, that even Engels had his doubts as to the bourgeois nature of Luther's heresy, for, in "Ludwig Feuerbach," he asserted that the Frenchman, Calvin, had brought out the bourgeois character of the Reformation much better than the German, Luther. Calvinism had ". . . justified itself as the true religious disguise of the interests of the bourgeoisie of that time . . ." especially in England.[156] Thus it would seem that Lutheranism had not even expressed the true bourgeois character in religious guise. This suspicion is strengthened by another passage in the introduction to Engels' "Socialism: Utopian and Scientific," of 1892, in which he stated:

> . . . The war cry raised against the Church by Luther was responded to by two insurrections of a political nature: first, that of the lower nobility under Franz von Sickingen (1523), then the Great Peasants' War, 1525. Both were defeated. Chiefly in consequence of

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[155] Ibid.

[156] On Religion, p. 265

> the indecision of the parties most interested [my italics], the burghers of the towns . . . . The Lutheran Reformation produced a new creed, indeed, a religion adopted to absolute monarchy . . . .
>
> But where Luther failed, Calvin won the day. Calvin's creed was one fit for the boldest of the bourgeoisie of his time . . . .[157]

The problem is complicated still more, however, by Engels' interpretation of Renaissance ideology. In "Ludwig Feuerbach," the same essay in which he had termed Lutheranism the ideological expression of the bourgeoisie, he continued:

> . . . Just as the whole Renaissance period, from the middle of the 15th century was an essential product of the towns and, therefore, of the burghers, so also was the newly awakened philosophy. Its content was in essence only the philosophical expression of the thoughts corresponding to the development of the small and middle burghers into a bourgeoisie . . . .[158]

However, when he tried to define this "philosophical expression" of the burghers, he had to trace the ideas back to the Arabs and the Greeks: ". . . while among the Latins a cheerful spirit of free thought, taken over from the Arabs and nourished by the newly discovered Greek philosophy, took root more and more and prepared the way for the materialism of the eighteenth century."[159] Thus once again Engels had to go back to intellectual traditions, but these intellectual traditions were not the same as those which had led to the Reformation. Yet both were the ideological expression of the bourgeoisie.

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[157] Ibid., p. 300.

[158] Ibid., p. 262.

[159] "Dialectics of Nature," ibid., p. 153.

Had Engels taken the trouble to investigate Luther's ideas, or those of Calvin and the Humanists, he might have realized that he could not move so highhandedly over the intellectual history of the Renaissance and Reformation. This, however, he failed to do. As a result, Engels ended up with Lutheranism, Calvinism, and Renaissance thought all being burgher ideologies. But if all three were burgher ideologies, why the differences in content? Engels avoided the problem by stating: "We will now in addition deal only briefly with religion, since the latter stands furthest away from material life and seems [my italics] to be most alien to it . . . ."[160] By dealing only briefly with religion and philosophy, the weaknesses of Engels' epistemological theory did not at once become apparent.

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[160] "Ludwig Feuerbach," ibid., p. 263.

Most of Engels' Marxist successors have given assent to the thesis that Lutheranism, Calvinism, and Renaissance Humanism were all ideological expressions of the 15th- and 16th-century European bourgeoisie but it was not until very recently that actual attempts were made to demonstrate the validity of the thesis with actual analyses of the intellectual history of the time. Immediately this was done, the weaknesses of Engels' generalizations became apparent and had to be explained.

As has been noted, Engels stated that Calvinism had manifested the true bourgeois content in its ideology as compared with Lutheranism. He had not explained why, however. Mehring was to give the answer: Calvinism, he stated, had been more revolutionary because the countries to which it had spread had been wealthier and capitalism further advanced, while Lutheranism had remained the religion of the economically backward countries.[161] Leo Stern, writing in 1952, reached the same general conclusion for the separation of the Reformed cause in Germany into Lutheran and Calvinist factions: those regions in Germany that had espoused the Calvinist faith had been more progressive, democratic, and republican regions.[162] According to Marxist theory, this was a reasonable solution, but, as has been noted, Russian Marxist historians, basing their reasoning on the late Engels and 'bourgeois' source publications, have come to the conclusion that Germany had not been an economically splintered and backward country.[163] How, then, would the problem be resolved? Would Engels' thesis have to be revised, or could another constellation of the factual evidence be so arranged that it would still support the thesis?[164]

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[161] Mehring, Deutsche Geschichte, pp. 53-54.

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[162] ". . . mit einer schwachen Reichsgewalt und einer starken fürstlichen Territorialgewalt, mit der herrschenden feudalen Anarchie und mit einem zersplitterten, ökonomisch bereits im Abstieg befindlichen und politisch wenig kräftigen deutschen Bürgertum. Hier ist die Feststellung von Engels von prinzipieller Wichtigkeit, warum die lutherische Reformation auf die Bedürfnisse des ökonomisch und politisch rückständigeren Teils des gemässigten deutschen Bürgertums wie der aufstrebenden Territorialfürsten abgestellt war, während die fortgeschritteneren, demokratisch und republikanisch gesinnten Teil des deutschen Bürgertums sich dem Calvinismus anschlossen . . . ." Leo Stern, Martin Luther und Philipp Melanchthon (Berlin, 1953), p. 29.

[163] Karl Kleinschmidt, Martin Luther (Berlin, 1953), p. 61, still expounded this theory of a backward Germany as well. Heinz Kamnitzer, Vorgeschichte des Bauernkrieges (Berlin, 1953), p. 77, however, basing his argument on Engels' letter to Kautsky of September 15, 1889, asserted that Germany had been at the peak of European economy!

Very little has as yet been done to elaborate even the ideas of Luther, not to mention the ideas of the other Reformers.[165] However, from various sources here and there one can draw a fairly clear picture of the historiographical course the above problem has taken. In 1953, Gerhard Schilfert, in a review of the East German 1952 edition of Blos' Volksausgabe of Zimmermann's Bauernkrieg, remarked that the editor's note on page 622, which had stated that Luther had been the representative of the ". . . bürgerlich-demokratischen Lagers . . ." had been incorrect. The fitting description would have been: ". . . Das Lager der bürgerlich-gemässigten Reformation . . . ," in contrast to the more radical bourgeois Reformation of Zwingli.[166] Thus Zwingli took the place formerly occupied by Calvin. No explanation for the different character of the two movements was offered, however.

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[164] It is noteworthy, in this regard, that Leo Stern could boast: ". . . Nur die marxistische Geschichtsforschung kann die religiöspolitischen Streitfragen jener Übergangsperiode als den ideologischen Reflex der gleichzeitigen Klassenkämpfe nachweisen und Einsicht in die gesellschaftliche Zustrände jener Zeit vermitteln, die sowohl den Ausbruch dieser Kämpfe wie ihren Ausgang bedingten. Der kardinale Unterschied der marxistischen Analyse zu der herkömmlichen protestantischen wie katholischen Reformationsgeschichtesschreibung besteht vor allem darin, dass die religiösen und politischen Theorien der damaligen Zeit nicht als Ursachen, sondern als Resultate der beim Übergang von der feudalen zur kapitalistischen Gesellschaftsformation erreichten sozialökonomischen, politischen und kulturellen Entwicklungsstufe gezeigt und nach gewiesen werden." *Martin Luther und Philipp Melanchthon*, p. 11.

[165] In the introduction to his thirty-five theses on the *frühbürgerliche Revolution* in Germany, Steinmetz remarked: "Seit in den Jahren 1952 und 1953 die Arbeiten von A. Meusel, L. Stern, H. Kamnitzer und K. Kleinschmidt sowie die deutsche Übersetzung des Müntzerbuches von Smirin erschienen, ist wenig geschehen, um die zahlreichen noch offenen Fragen zu klären . . . ." *ZfG*, 8 (1960), I, 113.

In accordance with this division into moderate Lutheran Reform and more radical Zwinglian Reform with their respective ideologies, Hanna Köditz,[167] tried to determine the causes for the failure of the Marburg Colloquy to unify the two movements. She saw one reason for the failure in the constellation of the political powers in 1529, but another in the social roots of the two movements. The social reasons for the differing concepts, in the final analysis of the Lord's Supper, were to be sought in the fact that Zwingli found his support mainly in the Swiss bourgeoisie while Luther, since 1520, had turned more and more to the princes for support. In 1529, at the Marburg Colloquy, Luther decided once and for all in favor of a Magisterial Reformation, while Zwingli remained true to his bourgeoisie. Bucer, caught between the two, decided upon a compromise solution with Luther in accordance with the position of the bourgeoisie in Upper Germany.[168] Thus Köditz saw the social causes for the failure of the Marburg Colloquy in the unequal strength and development of the bourgeoisie. She failed to pursue the problem to its logical Marxist conclusion, however, for she did not state what had caused the unequal strength of the bourgeoisie in the first place. Obviously, it had been their economic power; but had she said this, she would have had to negate the fact that Germany had been at the peak of the European economy at the time of the Reformation.

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[166] ZfG, I (1953), I, 157.

[167] Hanna Köditz, "Die gesellschaftlichen Ursachen des Scheiterns des Marburger Religionsgesprächs vom 1. bis 4. Oktober 1529," ZfG, 2 (1954), I, 37-70. A characteristic of Köditz' article, as well as of many other Marxists, is its heavy dependence upon literature from before the turn of the century.

In 1958, Joseph Macek pointed to the fact that Marxist historians had too often identified the German Reformation only with Lutheranism and had forgotten that Zwingli's teachings had also played an important role in the movement. In fact, Zwingli had created the truly authentic bougeois ideology of the Reformation, for he had made it into a really revolutionary ideology which had gripped the peasants of Southern Germany as well as a large part of Switzerland. Nor had Zwingli, like Luther, gone over to the side of feudalism, for he had died doing battle for his cause.[169] But Macek did not give the reasons for the different character of the movements here either.

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[168] Ibid., pp. 50-64.

In a later essay, "Das revolutionäre Programm des deutschen Bauernkrieges von 1526,"[170] Macek did attempt to give an answer to the question why the ideologies of Luther and Zwingli had differed. Zwingli, he stated, had been more radical, more astute, and more volkstümlich. One of the reasons for this was that his ideas had been impregnated with the humanistic thought of Antiquity—the cause for his great admiration of Erasmus. The crucial reason, however, had to be found in the different social milieu in which the two found themselves, for, whereas Luther had gradually moved into the prince's camp, Zwingli had remained true to the class under whom he had begun his activity, the bourgeoisie.[171] But Macek failed to investigate to what extent feudalism still existed in Switzerland, or whether Zwingli was not in reality a greater timeserver of the temporal power—be this princely or bourgeois—than Luther had been.[172] The noteworthy aspect of Macek's position is, however, that he did not base these differences 'ultimately' upon a dogmatic interpretation of different stages in modes of production, but upon a total social milieu. Nevertheless, Macek placed a greater emphasis upon the influence of this social milieu as a power or force moulding Zwingli's thought than he did upon either the latter's humanism or his biblicism.[173]

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[169] Macek, op. cit., p. 120.

[170] Macek, "Das revolutionäre Programm des deutschen Bauernkrieges von 1526," Historica II, (Prague, 1960), pp. 111-44.

[171] Ibid., p. 117.

Macek's writings have not been without their influence upon the rest of Marxist historiography of the Reformation. In the next year already, Steinmetz, writing in his fourth thesis, blamed the long predominant Protest "Lutherlegende" not only for having put Müntzer and the Anabaptists in a bad light, but also, and especially, because it had long tried to hide the fact that there had been a second center of the frühbürgerliche Revolution in Germany: the Alps, especially the northern part of Switzerland, and Tyrol which had been the scenes of the activities of Zwingli, Gaismaier, Niklaus Manuel and others.[174] The influence of this second center of the frühbürgerliche Revolution had reached far into Southern Germany to such cities as Strassburg, Memmingen, Constance, and Lindau.[175]

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[172] "Es ist von jeher aufgefallen, das Zwingli eine andere Auffassung vom Staat vertritt als der obrigkeitstreue Luther, dass er bereit ist, nicht nur im Notstand, sondern prinzipiell, dem christlichen Magistrat auch die Verantwortung für die Kirche zu übertragen, dass zugleich der Kirche gegenüber der Regierung ein prophetisch-kritisches 'Wächteramt' (nach Ezech. 3 und 33) aufgetragen ist, dass das Volk gegen eine Obrigkeit, die 'ussert der schnur Christi' verfährt, ein Widerstandsrecht besitzt . . . ." Gottfried W. Locher, "Die Wandlung des Zwingli-Bildes in der neueren Forschung," Zwingliana, XI (1963), 9, 578.

[173] ". . . Dass diese Thesen aber nicht nur Ausdruck der schweizerisch-republikanischen Tradition, sondern einer theologischen Grundhaltung sind, wird erst unserer Generation allmählich klar . . . ." Ibid.

Steinmetz touched on this aspect of the Reformation in his essay, "Probleme der frühbürgerlichen Revolution," again, but only insofar as it concerned Luther. He did not compare the two, but the tendency to place Luther's transition from the bourgeois' to the prince's party back to the year 1521,[176] as Hanna Köditz had, seems to be an attempt to avoid the problem. The same attempt is also made in his textbook.[177] It fails to solve the problem, however, for if Luther had to change his ideology from that of a bourgeoisie to that of a princely one, then obviously the bourgeoisie was even weaker than the Marxists had earlier assumed. Engels, for example, as well as Kautsky had placed Luther's traitorous act later and as a result had been able to maintain the fiction of a bourgeois revolution without a bourgeoisie a little farther into the Reformation period. Later Marxists have given this up because it led to some embarrassment when they discovered that Germany, and hence the German bourgeoisie, was not as economically backward as Engels had at first assumed. But by placing Luther's transition to the princely cause already in 1521, they weaken the German bourgeoisie even more and their economic base as well.

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[174] Steinmetz put the blame on the wrong party here. He should have placed it on Zimmermann, and Zimmermann's Marxist reinterpreter, Engels, who had made Müntzer into the great revolutionary hero whose influence had reached far into Southern Germany and Switzerland. Thus Marxists had not seen Zwingli's influence for the mirage of Müntzer's influence. The implications for Müntzer's activities are clear and will be pointed out in the appropriate place.

[175] ZfG, 8 (1960), I, 115.

[176] Frühbürgerliche Revolution, p. 46.

[177] Max Steinmetz, Deutschland 1476-1648 (Berlin, 1965), pp. 107-14.

New dimensions are added to the problem, however, when the historiography of the Marxist interpretation of Renaissance Humanism is added to the picture.[178] Renaissance Humanism is seen, in direct dependence upon Burckhardt, as being of an exclusively secular nature;[179] but it is also the ideological expression of a bourgeois class arising on the back of an emerging capitalism. This young bourgeoisie had become vitally interested in the things of this world and needed a new ideology to sanctify its new material and secular interests. When it came to tracing the origin of the ideas of Renaissance thought, however, the Marxists also had to point to the revival of Classical Greek and Latin literature as the source.[180]

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[178] This aspect of the problem will only be dealt with briefly here.

[179] Marxists therefore vehemently reject such interpretations as G. Toffanin, Geschichte des Humanismus (Pantheon, 1941), who emphasized the Christian nature of Renaissance Humanism.

But if the content of Italian Renaissance Humanism was of a secular nature, then why the change to the more Christian content of Northern Humanism? The Marxists have tried to find the cause for this change in content in the economic backwardness of the bourgeoisie in Germany,[181] or in the absence of a bourgeoisie altogether in Hungary, for example.[182] Yet, whatever the sociological reasons for the Christian nature of Northern Humanism, the fact remains that the secular Italian Renaissance Humanism is the true ideology of the bourgeoisie for the Marxists, which was finally victorious in the French Revolution. But, if the Marxist argument is that the bourgeoisie first reached its full bloom before the French Revolution and therefore gave expression to a secularized ideology at that time, why the secular ideology already in

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[180] Thus Mehring stated that in Italy ". . . wo die neue Produktionsweise sich eine neue Weltanschauung, eine neue Kunst und Wissenschaft nicht erst mühsam zu schaffen brauchte, sondern die ihren Bedürfnissen entsprechende Denkform schon in der antiken Literature vorfand, deren Überlieferungen in Italien und überhaupt in den Mittelmeerländern nie völlig erloschen waren." Quoted in Stern, Luther und Melanchthon, p. 42.

[181] Thus ibid., p. 48.

[182] Tibor Kardos, "Entwicklungsgang und osteuropäische Merkmale des ungarischen Humanismus," Renaissance und Humanismus in Mittel- und Osteuropa, 2 vols. (Berlin, 1962), II, 5.

Renaissance Italy? On the other hand, the fact that the most secular form of Renaissance Humanism developed in Italy stands in obvious contradiction to the Marxist conclusion that Germany was indeed at the height of the European economy at the time and should, therefore, have produced the strongest and most revolutionary bourgeoisie with the most secular ideology. Exactly the opposite is true, however. The closer one comes to the great 'capitalistic' mining center of Europe—Saxony—the more religious became the ideological expressions of the emerging bourgeois classes. This has led Leo Stern, who had the misfortune of accepting Engels' erroneous early assessment of Germany's economic status at face value, to complain that the Italian Humanists had been more daring in their thinking than their German counterparts.[183]

Thus the Marxists have added a second contradiction to the contradiction of the bourgeois revolution without a bourgeoisie: the contradiction between secular Italian Renaissance ideology, which, incidentally, was not revolutionary, in a region less economically developed than Germany, and a religious Reformation ideology that was more revolutionary in less economically developed Switzerland than in Germany. But once again, the problem is one of their own making. Rather than view the interaction of ideas upon societies as a two-way street, the Marxists have viewed it as a one-way street with the 'ultimate' cause, the economic factor, asserting itself from below. This has led them, as Engels complained at the end of his life, to neglect the influence or the reaction of ideas upon the material base. Much more, it has also led them to neglect the study of ideas almost completely, allowing them to rest all the more securely on their theoretical assumptions.

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[183] Stern, Luther und Melanchthon, p. 48.

This is not the place to answer the questions raised in this chapter: many of these will be answered in the course of the following chapters. Here it is necessary only to point out that ideas originate in people, in individuals, but are modified by society as they filter down to the masses. Undoubtedly, social factors to varying degrees determine to what extent these ideas are modified, but other factors enter into the picture as well. One cannot, therefore, proceed from the assumption that the social factors are the most important ones before one has even begun to study the ideas and their influence in their social context. The relative importance of each must always be determined in concrete historical situations. The Reformation was certainly a period in which ideas came into conflict with social movements. The appearance of Luther and his teachings at a time when the peasants were already in the process of revolting was what constituted the tragedy of Luther and the Peasant War. But—we shall have to come back to this problem again.

In conclusion, only a modern parable. Marxist historiography of the Reformation is therefore like unto a jigsaw puzzle whose individual pieces make up a different picture from the one portrayed on the cover of the box containing the pieces. The Marxists have seen the picture on the cover before they ever assembled the individual pieces and have thus proceeded from the assumption that the individual pieces, correctly assembled, will produce the picture on the cover. In this belief, they have begun to assemble and to piece together, but the finished product of the assembled pieces has not produced the picture on the cover. As a result, the Marxists have assumed that they have assembled the pieces incorrectly, and so they have tried a different constellation of the individual pieces. This has only caused greater confusion rather than producing the picture on the cover. Until the present, however, they have not come upon the idea of discarding the picture on the cover and simply trying to assemble the pieces to see what picture is actually produced. The picture in this parable is the Marxist theory of history, and the pieces of the puzzle are the historical facts.

CHAPTER VI

THE PEASANTS AND THE PEASANT WAR

A. The Role of the Peasant in Marxist Ideology

In Part I of this study it was noted that Marx and Engels developed the sociological categories through which they interpreted history from a criticism of 19th-century capitalistic society. It is important to recall this fact once more in attempting to determine the role Marx and Engels assigned to the peasants in the initial stages of the bourgeois revolution, for in these initial stages the class conflict was to be found between the emerging bourgeoisie and the dying feudal powers. As a capitalistic society matured, however, the feudal powers died and the proletariat arose to make class war against the owners of the capitalistic means of production. Any role that the peasants could play in the bourgeois or proletarian revolution, therefore, could only be a supporting role on one side or the other. In feudal society, of course, the conflict had been between feudal landlord and peasant and hence peasant revolts had been the order of the day.[1] It may therefore not be out of place to preface this chapter with a brief enquiry into Marx's and Engels' view concerning the role of the peasant in history. For, after all is said and done, 16th-century Germany did witness a revolt of the peasantry; and if the Marxists persist in calling the Reformation period the era of the frühbürgerliche Revolution, then we should like to know what role the peasants played in it.[2]

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[1] Otto Brunner, "Feudalismus"—Ein Beitrag zur Begriffsgeschichte (Wiesbaden, 1958), Nr. 10, Abhandlungen der Geistes- und Sozialwissenschaftlichen Klasse der Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literature. "Wie Lorenz von Stein hatte auch Karl Marx keinen Grund, tiefer in die geschichtliche Vergangenheit zurückzugreifen. Es ging beiden Autoren um eine Analyse der Gegenwart und um Zukunftsprognosen. Von hier aus konnte man den 'Feudalismus,' wie er vor 1789 bestanden hat, als Gegenbild zur eigenen Zeit betrachten, bedurfte aber keiner näheren Darstellung seines geschichtlichen Wesens und seiner Wandlungen," p. 23.

[2] There is no study which deals specifically with the theoretical role of the peasantry in Marxist thought. For the available literature on the problem relevant to the role of the peasant in capitalistic society, see Dieter Hertz-Eichearode, "Karl Marx über das Bauerntum und die Bündnisfrage," International Review of Social History, XI (1966), 3, 382-402. Hertz-Eichearode, stated: ". . . Was den theoretischen Aspekt betrifft, so hat Marx dem Bauerntum in dieser Hinsicht kein besonderes Interesse entegegengebracht. Es ist ihm eine dem Mittelalter adäquate Wirtschaftsform gewesen, die im Laufe der Neuzeit vom weitflächigen Grossbetrieb verdrängt worden sei bzw. noch verdrängt werden sollte . . . ," p. 383.

The assumption in Marx's "Der achtzehnte Brumaire des Louis Bonaparte," is that in the early stages of capitalism the peasants are the natural allies of the emerging bourgeoisie.[3] This may well find its rationale in the fact that Marx and Engels projected the idea of the class struggle back into feudal society; hence, the feudal landowner and the peasants became the counterpart of the capitalistic owner and exploited proletariat respectively.[4] In the transition period from feudalism to capitalism, however, the emerging bourgeosie becomes the antagonist of feudalism because the latter is seen as constricting the expansion of the new capitalistic mode of production. Thus, the peasants and the emerging bourgeoisie both find themselves in opposition to the feudal powers and consequently have common interests. This common interest does not last, however, for once the capitalistic mode of production has replaced that of feudalism the peasants become the natural allies of the proletariat.[5]

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[3] ". . . Das Interesse der Bauern befindet sich also nicht mehr, wie unter Napoleon, im Einklange, sondern im Gegensatz mit den Interessen der Bourgeoisie, mit dem Kapital. Sie finden also ihren natürlichen Verdündeten und Führer in dem städtischen Proletariat, dessen Aufgabe der Umsturz der bürgerlichen Ordnung ist . . . ." M/E, Werke, VII, 201-202.

[4] ". . . Die Verfügung über die Produktionsmittel führt zu Herrschaft und damit zur Ausbeutung im Kapitalismus . . . und entsprechend auch, wesentlich als Herrschaft über Grund und Boden, im Feudalismus . . . ." Brunner, Feudalismus, p. 23.

The assumption behind this theory was, of course, that the peasants could be herded into a single general category. In a letter to Marx of November 1, 1869,[6] however, Engels differentiated between four types of peasants besides the large landowner whom he now equated with the bourgeoisie as belonging to the possessing class and hence to the exploiters.[7] In the first place there was the peasant who, according to Engels, would probably not care whether his land belonged to the state or to a large landowner. Then he differentiated between two types of landholding peasants: the 'big' peasant and the 'middle' peasant, both of whom Engels considered reactionary and against whom he wanted the day laborer and the farmhand incited.[8] Lastly there was the 'debt-laden' small peasant who could be won over to the proletarian cause if the mortgage question were handled correctly. Thus, of the four types of peasants, Engels believed only two could be won to the radical cause.[9]

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[5] See above, n. 2.

[6] Selected Correspondence, p. 71.

[7] Engels expressed this idea in a similar way in a letter to the Spanish Federal Council, February 13, 1871: ". . . The possessing classes—the landed aristocracy and the bourgeoisie—keep the working people in servitude . . . ." Ibid., p. 315. If Engels regarded the landed aristocracy, the exploiting class in feudalism, a remnant of feudalism, then perhaps feudalism and capitalism were not as mutually exclusive modes of production as the Marxists have assumed.

Whereas, therefore, the peasant was considered to be the burden bearer in Medieval society, in the capitalistic society this role was taken over by the proletariat. Consequently the peasant was forced into a supporting role: in the early stages of capitalism he was the ally of the bourgeoisie and in the later stages, the ally of the proletariat. Engels, however, saw that the problem was not quite that simple, and taken as a whole, he felt that the peasants would never become as radical as the proletariat.[10] Yet for the period of transition from feudalism to capitalism he was in full agreement with Marx's analysis.

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[8] Hence Engels did not see the peasants as supporters of the proletariat, at least not those who owned their land.

[9] Selected Correspondence, p. 71. A year later, 1870, Liebknecht wrote to Engels: ". . . Main Vortrag wurde auch von Bauern angehört, die vollständig bekehrt waren. Die Bauern, d.h. Klein-Grundbesitzer und Ackerknechte für uns zu gewinnen, halte ich mit Dir für unsere Hauptaufgabe . . . ." Liebsknecht Briefwechsel, p. 96.

B. The Causes of the Peasant War

From a superficial analysis of the Marxist theory of history one would expect to find that the Marxist historian would have concerned himself first and foremost with the material causes of the Peasant War. Such is not the case, however.[11] The answer to this somewhat curious phenomenon lies hidden in the fact that from the very beginning the Marxists have attempted to place the Reformation and the Peasant War into its larger Marxist frame of reference: the *frühbürgerliche Revolution*. Thus Engels can dismiss the causes of the peasant uprising in a few paragraphs.

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[10] In a letter to Bernstein of March 24, 1884, he wrote: ". . . Will man aber heute die Demokratie als Zweck, so muss man sich auf Bauern und Kleinbürger stützen, d.h. auf Klassen, die am Untergehen und gegenüber dem Proletariat, sobald sie sich künstlich erhalten wollen, reaktionär sind . . . ." *Briefe an Bernstein*, p. 142.

[11] The debate regarding the causes of the Peasant War has been much more vigorous in non-Marxist literature and is as yet by no means closed. For the Marxist to debate the problem, however, is relatively uninteresting because the reasons are obvious to him and need only to be reiterated.

Of all the classes at the time of the Reformation with the exception of the pre-proletariat, the peasants were the most exploited. Whether he belonged to a prince, noble, bishop, monastery, or a city, the peasant was treated not as an individual but as any other beast of burden, and sometimes even worse. If a serf, he was dependent upon his lord for life and sustenance; were he a vassal, his legal feudal obligations were onerous enough to suffocate him. Yet these very obligations grew more severe from day to day. Most of the time he was forced to spend working on his lord's domain, and from that which he could grow on his own plot of land in his spare time he had to pay a whole host of taxes. Come death or the marriage of a daughter, his lord demanded a tax. Nor could he amuse himself by hunting and fishing for these were pastimes reserved for his master. The Common upon which he grazed his cow or herded his flock together with the other villagers was absorbed into the lord's domain little by little. The peasant's life as well as that of his family came under the lord's control just as much as property. Truly, the burden of the peasant had been a terrible one. Yet it had been difficult to bring him to a state of revolution.[12]

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[12] Engels, "Bauernkrieg," M/E, Werke, VII, 339-40.

As time went on, however, Engels began to realize that such a general summation needed supplementation. In an article of 1882, entitled, "Die Mark,"[13] he began to differentiate between those peasants who had settled in Eastern Germany, especially in Brandenburg and Silesia, after the 12th century, and those who remained behind. He now found the reasons for the absence of a peasant revolt in the eastern and northern regions of Germany in the relatively more favorable conditions of settlement the peasants had been granted here. Even as a whole, however, the peasant's lot had begun to improve from the mid 12th century onward. Many of the landlords who themselves moved eastward had simply freed their peasants, while others died without heir or were forced downward on the social ladder. Furthermore, the ever increasing financial needs of the lords made a money relationship between lord and vassal more important than a personal bond relationship. The colonization of arable lands did not only take place in the northeastern regions of Germany, however, but wherever such land was available. Just as in the northeast, better conditions had to be offered in order to induce peasants to settle on these lands.

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[13] Engels, "Die Mark," Zur deutschen Geschichte, I, 142-56.

But if these were granted more favorable conditions, the peasants on the old land demanded the same conditions. Thus, although the peasant had to pay his dues and render his services, these were usually not too onerous. What was more important, however, was that the peasant gained his personal freedom in all parts of Germany except in the Lithuanian-Prussian region.[14]

With the rise of the cities in the 14th and 15th centuries as the result of guild production and increasing trade, the demand for money increased. Since only the peasant could produce this money,[15] renewed pressure in the form of tithes, dues, and services was exerted upon the vassal, while at the same time the free peasant was made into a vassal and the vassal into a serf. A not insignificant role in this process was played by a new class in the employ of the secular lords, the jurists schooled in the fine points of Roman Law. The ecclesiastical lords, however, helped themselves to the new rights simply by forging new documents. At first this transformation in the status of the peasant progressed slowly, but with the Thirty Years' War it was considerably accelerated, for of all those who suffered from the effects of this war the peasant was hit hardest. Thus the lord was in a position to do with him what he wanted.[16]

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[14] *Ibid.*, pp. 151-52.

[15] Engels is referring to the fact that in feudalism the peasant was in possession of the mode of production. The peasant, however, did not produce the money; this was done by the manufacture and trade of goods. For the large landowners, however, the peasants were the only source of income and in that sense Engels must be understood here.

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[16] Engels based his analysis primarily on Georg Ludwig von Maurer's books on Geschichte der Marken-Verfassung in Deutschland (Erlangen, 1856), and Geschichte der Fronhöfe, der Bauernhöfe und der Hofverfassung in Deutschland, 4 vols. (Erlangen, 1862-1863). Marx had recommended these as ". . . ausserordentlich bedeutend. Nicht nur die Urzeit, sondern die ganze spätere Entwicklung der freien Reichsstädte, der Immunität besitzenden Gutsbesitzer, der öffentlichen Gewalt, des Kampfes zwischen freien Bauerntum und Leibeigenschaft erhält eine ganz neue Gestalt." Marx to Engels, March 25, 1868. M/E, Werke, XXXII, 51. In a letter to Marx of December 15, 1882, just after he had written "Die Mark" and sent it to Marx for his approval, he wrote: "I consider that the view expounded here regarding the conditions of the peasantry in the Middle Ages and the rise of a second serfdom after the middle of the fifteenth century is on the whole incontrovertible. I have been right through Maurer for all the relevant passages and find nearly all my assertions there, supported, moreover, with evidence, while alongside of them are exactly the opposite, but either unsupported by evidence or taken from a period which is not that in question at all . . . ." Selected Correspondence, p. 407. Engels had not only read the works of Maurer, however, but also Nikolaus K. Kindlinger's Geschichte der deutschen Hörigkeit (Osnabrück, 1819), as well as a study by a certain Meitzen and another by Hanssen. See his letter to Marx of December 16, 1882, ibid., p. 408. To Bernstein he wrote on the same day: ". . . Das Manuskript über die Mark hat dreimal umgeschrieben werden müssen, ich habe dazu aus den Maurerschen zehn dicken Bänden zirka fünf bis sechs wieder durchlesen, dazu andere Quellen vergleichen müssen. Nun habe ich es an Marx geschickt, der diese Sachen viel länger und gründlicher geochst hat als ich, ich erwarte es Montag zurück . . . ." Briefe en Engels, p. 105.

If a worsening of conditions began to set in for the peasant after the beginning of the 14th century, what was his status at the time of the Peasant War? In "Die Mark" Engels had only stated that really unbearable conditions had been imposed upon the peasants after the Thirty Years' War. The picture he had painted in his Bauernkrieg, therefore, needed revision especially after his reading of Maurer.[17] But Engels was uncertain as to what extent the peasant conditions had worsened and precisely how bad they actually were at the time of the Peasant War. In a letter to Marx of December 16, 1882, he came to the following conclusion:

> The point about the almost total disappearance of serfdom—legally or actually—in the 13th and 14th centuries is the most important to me, because formerly you expressed a divergent opinion on this. In the East Elbe region the colonisation proves that the German peasants were free; in Schleswig-Holstein Maurer admits that at that time "all" the peasants had regained their freedom (perhaps rather later than the 14th century). He also admits that in South Germany it was just at this period that the bondmen were best treated. In lower Saxony more or less the same (e.g.,

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[17] In a letter to Marx of December 22, 1882, Engels himself noted the need for revision: ". . . I am glad that on the history of serfdom we 'proceed on agreement,' as they say in business. It is certain that serfdom and bondage are not a peculiarly medieval-feudal form, we find them everywhere or nearly everywhere where conquerors have the land cultivated for them by the old inhabitants—e.g., very early in Thessaly. This fact has even misled me [my italics] and many other people about servitude in the Middle Ages; one was much too much inclined to base it simply on conquest, this made everything so neat and easy . . . ." Selected Correspondence, 412.

> the new Meier [tenant farmers] who were in fact copyholders). He is only opposed to Kindlinger's view that serfdom first arose in the 16th century. But that it was newly reinforced after that, and appeared in a second edition, seems to me indubitable. Meitzen gives the dates at which serfs begin to be mentioned again in East Prussia, Brandenburg, Silesia: the middle of the 16th century; Hanssen gives the same for Schleswig-Holstein. When Maurer calls this a milder form of serfdom he is right in comparison with the ninth and eleventh centuries, when the old Germanic slavery still continued, and right too with regard to the legal powers which the lord also had then and later—according to the law books of the 13th century—over his serfs. But compared with the actual position of the peasants in the 13th, the 14th and, in North Germany, the 15th centuries, the new serfdom was anything but an alleviation. Especially after the Thirty Years' War! . . . .[18]

Yet even here he did not commit himself on the peasant conditions at the time of the Peasant War. In a note to the third edition of Karl Marx's Das Kapital, vol. I, however, he made the following comment: "In the 15th century the German peasant found himself subjected to certain obligations in produce and work in nearly all parts of the land, but otherwise he was in fact a free man. The German colonists in Brandenburg, Pomerania, Silesia, and East Prussia were reckoned free men even before the law. The victory of the princes in the Peasant War made an end of this [my italics]. Not only the conquered South German peasants again became serfs, but from the mid 16th century on the East Prussian, Brandenburg, Pomeranian, Silesian, and shortly thereafter also the Schleswig-Holstein peasants were degraded to the level of serfs . . . ."[19] Thus Engels had come to the conclusion that the Peasant War was not only the consequence of the oppression of the peasants; the defeat of the peasants was also a major cause of the oppression. The peasant's burden had only been relatively heavier before the Peasant War when compared with the peasant of the 12th and 13th centuries.[20]

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[18] *Ibid*., p. 409.

It is characteristic of Marxist historiography of the Peasant War that greater attention has been paid to the nascent proletarian movement than to determining the causes of the Peasant War. Thus, in his first publications on the Peasant War, Kautsky attempted to trace the role of the miners in this uprising.[21] All he had to say about the peasants themselves was that they had been the ". . . vanguard of the dissatisfied lower classes . . . ."[22] In his Vorläufer des neueren Sozialismus, Kautsky took much the same position as Engels had taken in his "Die Mark." The 13th and 14th centuries had seen an improvement in the peasant position, but with the rise of commercial capitalism and the transfer of many of the smaller free cities into the hands of the nobles, and the rise of a patrician class in the larger cities just as interested in exploiting the peasant as the noble, the peasant position took a turn for the worse.[23] The real oppression of the peasants, however, had come later.[24]

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[19] Zur deutschen Geschichte, p. 157.

[20] In his study, Der detsche Bauernkrieg (Braunschweig, 1876), August Bebel portrayed the peasant in much the same way as Engels had in his Bauernkrieg. It is remarkable that Bebel's study has aroused no interest in Marxist historiography. One is inclined to suspect that Bebel relied rather heavily on Engels' study for there is great similarity between the two, the major differences being that Bebel lacked Engels' theoretical insight. Kautsky, on the other hand, after the initial denunciation from the orthodox because of his revisionistic tendencies, is being cited more and more.

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[21] Karl Kautsky, "Die Bergarbeiter und der Bauernkrieg." Kautsky had concerned himself with the contemporary peasant problems in Austria and had written some articles in a peasant paper there. In order to approach these problems from the correct perspective he had reread Engels' Bauernkrieg. Thereupon he wrote Engels on December 9, 1881: ". . . Ich habe jetzt wieder ihre Broschure über den Bauernkrieg gelesen, weil ich in meinem nächsten Bauernflugblatt an diesen anknüpfen will, und habe eine ganz überraschende Ähnlichkeit der damaligen mit der heutigen Bewegung gefunden. Hier wie dort Hass gegen Adel, Klerus, Advokatentum, dagegen Zutrauen zur kaiserlichen Majestät. Hier wie dort eifrige Religiösität; hier wie dort die lokale Zersplitterung . . . ." E/K, Briefwechsel, p. 41.

[22] Kautsky, "Bergarbeiter," p. 289.

Mehring, however, returned to Engels' earlier position. The oppression of the peasants had been so great before the uprising that their condition could not have become much worse; everything had already been taken from them. Even so, some middle class peasants had been ruined, a mass of vassals degraded to serfs, many villages robbed of their Common, and others ruined through the destruction of their homes and lands. But war and destruction belonged to the daily occurrences of the time and, in general, the niveau of the peasant had been such that it could not sink much lower.[25]

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[23] Kautsky, Vorläufer, pp. 59-62.

[24] Ibid., pp. 63-64. Even in this volume Kautsky was primarily concerned with the working classes of the time, and not the peasants. In a letter of February 19, 1892, he wrote Engels: "Ich liess daher die Münzergeschichte stehn und wendete mich den ökonomischen Wurzeln der damaligen Arbeiter-Bewegung zu; die erste Frucht war eine Arbeit über die Bergarbeiter. Eine andere habe ich, soweit es auf Material ankommt, fast vollendet; über die Geselenverbände. Eine dritte projektirte ich über die Wollenweber, die m. E. die Träger des damaligen primitiven Kommunismus waren; auch darüber habe ich schon ziemliches Material. Eine vierte Arbeit endlich sollte einen Abriss der kommunistischen Bewegung von den Hussiten bis Münster geben. Das Ganze wollte ich dann in einem Band, 'Die Arbeiterbewegung im Zeitalter der Reformation' vereinigen." E/K, Briefwechsel, p. 329.

Ernst Bloch, writing in 1920, however, negated the exclusive or even 'ultimate' influence of material causes as motives for the Peasant War.[26] These motives might well have accelerated the coming of the war, but they had not caused it. The 'myths' of the times as expressed in the Chiliasm and Spiritualism of the Anabaptists and especially of Thomas Müntzer had been the effective movers of the masses to revolution.[27] The ". . .earnest will to realize paradise . . ."[28] here on earth, a dream as old as mankind, had to be given its proper place in the Reformation period. In stressing this aspect of the causation, Bloch turned expressis verbis against Marx and his exclusively economic interpretation.[29] In his book of a year later, he formulated his thesis somewhat differently, but his position remained the same.[30]

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[25] Franz Mehring, Deutsche Geschichte vom Ausgang des Mittelalters (Berlin, 1946), pp. 49-50.

[26] Ernst Bloch, "Blick in den Chiliasmus des Bauernkrieges und Wiedertäufertums," Genius, Zeitschrift für werdende und Alte Kunst, vol. 1 (München, 1920), 310-13.

[27] Bloch calls these forces Illusionen. For a comparison of Bloch's ideas with Sorel's 'myth,' see the chapter on Thomas Müntzer.

[28] Bloch, "Blick in den Chiliasmus," p. 110.

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[29] ". . . Dennoch aber, gerade daran, dass noch mehr geschah, das Täufertum und Chiliasmus damals in Gang gerieten, völlig originär, mit wirksamsten 'Illusionen': gerade daran erweist sich, wie wenig ökonomische oder auch ihnen nachfolgend, politische Motive, die Faktoren institutioneller Bewegung, Lockerung, Umschichtung der damaligen Gesellschaft, zur Erfassung des Reformationswesens ausreichen, mögen sie auch noch so weithin dessen Ausbruch beschleunigt haben. Neigungen, Träume, erste reine Regungen, zielhafte Begeisterungen sind noch von anderer als der greifbarsten Not genährt und dennoch niemals wesenlose Ideologie; sie gehen nicht unter, färben real eine lange Strecke mit, entspringen einem originalen, werterzeugenden, wertbestimmenden Punkt in der Seele, brennen dunkel (auch nach aller Katastrophe im ökonomisch-politischen Stoff, in dieser gleichfalls leichthin transzendenten, jedoch von Satanismen erfüllten Interessenmaterie), als Postulat in der halb geschehenen, punktierten, allein wahren 'geschichtsphilosophischen' Menschengeschichte weiter. Selbst Marx gibt den Illusionen derart wnigstens die Realität des Antriebs, so positivistisch er auch sonstwie den Sozialismus aus Theologie in Nationalökonomie und nichts als diese verlegt hat, ihm derart den vollen, sowohl historisch überlieferten wie apriorisch eingeborenen Umfang des Begriffs entziehend. Was also den besonderen Fall von Bauernkrieg, Bildersturm, Spiritualismus angeht, so muss hier erst recht neben den wirtschaftlich bestehenden Elementen von Auslösung und Konfliktsinhalt das Wesenselement an sich erblickt werden: als Umgang des ältesten Traums, als breitester Ausbruch der Ketzergeschichte, als Ekstase des aufrechten Gangs und des geduldlosesten, rebellischsten, ernstlichen Willens zum Paradies." Ibid., p. 110.

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[30] "Folglich ziemt von hier ab, den aufständischen Bauern auch tiefer und nicht nur wirtschaftlich ins Herz zu sehen. Will man wirklich begreifen, was damals geschah und geschehen konnte, so fügt sich dem wirtschaftlichen Anstoss unweigerlich noch ein anderer Zwang und Ruf hinzu. Denn das ökonomische Begehren ist zwar das nüchternste und stetigste, aber nicht das einzige, nicht das andauernd stärkste, auch nicht das eigentümlichste Motiv der menschlichen Seele, vor allem nicht in religiös erregten Zeiten. Nicht nur frei schwebende Willensrichtungen, sondern eben auch völlig allgemein ergreifende, mindestens soziologisch reale Gebilde geistiger Art stehen dem ökonomischen Geschehnis jederzeit wirksam entgegen oder zur Seite. Der Zustand der Jeweiligen Produktionsweise ist an sich schon, als Wirtschaftsgesinnung, abhängig von höheren, gleichzeitig mitgegebenen Gesinnungskomplexen, vorab, wie Max Weber zeigte, solchen religiöser Art; dergestalt, dass die Wirtschaftsweise bald genug bereits selber religiös geladen ist und in ihrem selbständigen Vollzug bestenfalls den wirksamen Eintritt kulturell--religiöser Inhatte bedingt, keineswegs aber diese Inhalte ihrerseits erzeugt, aller Wechselwirkung entzogen mit nationalen Eigenschaften, mit übergebliebenen Ideologien früherer Wirtschaftsverhältnisse, alle identisch determinierte Kommunikation verneinend innerhalb des ungeteilt schwingenden Kulturkörpers und schliesslich alle Fernbeeinflussung ignorierend von Seiten eines selbständigen, wenn auch nicht historischen, so doch historisch-postulativen, 'geschichtsphilosophischen' Gang des Geistig-Religiösen. Dergestalt also reicht die rein ökonomische Betrachtung nicht aus, um allein nur den Eintritt eines historischen Ereignisses von der Wucht des Bauernkrieges vollkommen, restlos konditional oder kausal zu erklären, geschweige denn, dass ihre Analyse imstande wäre, die tieferen Inhalte der hier aufglühenden Menschengeschichte und gar erst die encheiresis gloriae, das umgehende Prinzip des dritten Reichs aufzulösen, herabzustürzen, seines absolut originären Charakters zu entkleiden, zu reflexivieren und ins rein Ideologische zu entrealisieren . . . ." Ernst Bloch, Thomas Münzer als Theologe der Revolution (München, 1921), pp. 73-74.

Despite Bloch's denial of the 'ultimate' motive force of economics in history, Marxist historiography continued to stress the material conditions of the peasants as causes for their revolution. In his Volksreformation, Smirin indicated what his position on this topic would be,[31] but it was not until his Deutschland vor der Reformation appeared that he dealt with the problem at any length. Meanwhile, however, his East German colleagues expressed their views. Meusel, for example, did not find it necessary to delve into the problem of the causes very seriously. It was enough to state that ". . . Exploited and oppressed classes are not in the habit of revolting when their condition is bad, but then when these conditions become even worse, that is, when these conditions get radically worse quickly . . . ."[32] Nor did Kammitzer go beyond Engels in his Vorgeschichte des Bauernkrieges. Although he painted the oppression of the peasants in the darkest of colors, in the final analysis he argued for a relative worsening of peasant conditions in the 15th and 16th centuries as causes for the Peasant War.[33]

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[31] Smirin, Volksreformation, p. 19.

[32] Alfred Meusel, Thomas Müntzer und seine Zeit (Berlin, 1952), p. 11. In his review, Max Steinmetz commented: ". . . Der grosse Vorzug der Arbeit Meusels ist die leidenschaftliche und konsequente Parteinahme für die Sache der Bauern . . . Vorzüglich gelungen ist S. 9 ff. die Schilderung der Lage der Bauern vor Ausbruch der Revolution . . . ." ZfG, 1 (1953), 6, 969-70.

[33] Kammitzer, Vorgeschichte des Bauernkrieges, p. 24.

Others, like Kleinschmidt and Stern painted the peasant conditions in the blackest of colors as well.[34]

Smirin's study on Germany before the Reformation went more into detail, however. Characteristically he began his chapter on the lot of the peasantry with the following words: "Engels writes concerning the development of agricultural conditions in Germany that the period in which the peasants occupied a relatively favorable position did not last long. Already in the 14th, and especially in the 15th century, a renewed pressure was exerted on the peasants . . . ."[35] With this introductory sentence, Smirin opened his defence of Engels' analysis in "Die Mark." Like Engels, therefore, Smirin also saw the peasant in the eastern regions as freer and less burdened than his counterpart in the rest of Germany.[36] The center of feudal 'reaction,' after the relative leniency of the lords in the 13th and early 14th centuries, was to be found in Southern Germany, especially in Upper Swabia and the region of the Black Forest in which a system of mixed landholding was practised by the lords. The lords attempted to raise the peasant's rents and services and to weaken his rights of ownership to the land particularly in this region in order not to be dependent upon a fixed money rent, which was continually worth less because of the process of inflation, as well as to be able to utilize to the full the profit from the peasant farms.[37] Even there, however, where the lords tried to establish a political unity in their scattered territories, their ultimate motive was their desire to consolidate their power over the economic resources of the land.

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[34] Kleinschmidt, Luther, p. 63; and Stern, Luther und Melanchthon, p. 24.

[35] Smirin, Deutschland vor der Reformation, p. 47.

[36] Ibid., p. 50.

The means by which the lords could accomplish this was through the reintroduction of serfdom. It was from this claim to ultimate control over the peasants themselves that the lords justified their generally increased demands upon free and unfree peasant alike. It was precisely against this 'feudal reaction' that the peasants rose in one revolt after another beginning in the 14th century. The crowning glory to this reactionary policy of the feudal landlords, however, came only after the Peasant War of 1525 with the introduction of the so-called 'second serfdom.'[38]

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[37] Ibid., pp. 73-74.

[38] Ibid., p. 101.

In his theses on the frühbürgerliche Revolution Steinmetz once more turned to the two aspects of the problem continually emphasized by the Marxists: first that the financial burdens of society weighed most heavily on the peasants; and, secondly, because of the transition to a monied economy, the feudal landlords began to reintroduce serfdom in order to reap as much of the profit as possible.[39] Although he cautioned against hasty generalizations and emphasized the need for research on the state of the peasant during the period preceding the Reformation, Steinmetz did not alter his fundamental position in his textbook.[40]

But the problem of the causes of the Peasant War became obvious even to the Marxists when they began to research the nature of the participants and their reasons for joining the uprising. In her criticism of Kamnitzer's chapter on the peasants in the latter's Vorgeschichte des Bauernkrieges, Annemarie Müller remarked:

> As important as it is for Kamnitzer to introduce his study with a chapter on the fundamental class antagonism of the time entitled 'Peasant and Feudal Lord,' it is just as important for Marxist historiography to go beyond these generalizations to enquire into the different economic conditions of the peasants; only an enquiry into these differing

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[39] Steinmetz, Thesen, p. 116.

[40] Steinmetz, Deutschland 1476-1648, pp. 35-39.

> conditions could lay the foundation for an Auseinandersetzung with the wrong bourgeois thesis [my italics] propounded since Gierke that the peasants did not fight against Feudalism and for economic improvement—a thesis which one has attempted to prove in vain with the reference to the contemporary ordinances against feudal luxury. Furthermore, the different peasant conditions in the various parts of Germany should be enquired into and the differences between the regions of revolt and those not touched by revolt clearly laid bare in order to analyze the causes of the Peasant War . . . .[41]

A few studies have consequently attempted to do so. Hanna Köditz, for example, noted that the peasants in the territory surrounding Mühlhausen had not joined in the revolt in its early stages despite the fact that, according to her, they had been sore oppressed.[42] Yet she found the reason for their peacefulness in the fact that the peasants in control of the villages, the wealthier peasants, were interested in maintaining the *status quo*.[43]

Dietrich Lösche turned to the same area in order to answer the same question.[44] In contrast to 'bourgeois' historians, who had pointed to the relatively good conditions the peasants surrounding

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[41] Annemarie Müller, *ZfG*, 2 (1954), 1, 131.

[42] Hanna Köditz, "Die Volksbewegung in Mühlhausen in Thuringen 1523-1573" (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Jena, 1959), p. 39.

[43] *Ibid*., pp. 39-43.

[44] Dietrich Lösche, Zur Lage der Bauern im Gebiet der ehemaligen freien Reichsstadt Mühlhausen i. th. zur Zeit des Bauernkrieges," *Frühbürgerliche Revolution*, pp. 64-72.

Mühlhausen enjoyed, Lösche came to the conclusion that a great range of differences had existed amongst these peasants. The great mass of the peasants lived in very poor circumstances with at least half of them having no possessions. In some of the villages, it was true, tolerable conditions existed, but not in most. Yet even within the individual villages there existed a wide range of differences. Despite these differences and the relative calm of the Thuringian peasant during the early phases of the Peasant War, Thomas Müntzer had managed to rally the great mass of the peasants to the revolutionary banner. Although Lösche began his article with a complaint about the fact that 'bourgeois' historians had not been able to reach a united conclusion with regard to the causes of the Peasant War, he had to conclude with the lament that his study had shown ". . . how difficult it was to come to an incontestable conclusion as to the economic status of the peasants at the time of the Peasant War . . . ."[45]

In his study on Thomas Müntzer und der Thüringer Aufstand 1525,[46] however, Bensing had to make certain qualifications to the Marxist thesis of the economic causes of the Peasant War. Although he stated that ". . . It is certain that the great mass of the insurgent peasants will have belonged to the poor inhabitants of the villages . . . ,"[47] yet the few random tests he had attempted pointed conclusively to the participation of wealthy free peasants. But even more difficult to determine than the participants of the war were the reasons for their participation! Some had fought in order to ward off the attempts of feudal lords to attack their ownership rights. He was forced to conclude, however, that economic and social reasons had not been the only reasons for the uprising. ". . . In many instances a true fear of God, which even made some princes vacillate in the early stages of revolt, may well have belonged to the motive forces inciting to revolt."[48] Perhaps, therefore, the problem was not really as simple as orthodox Marxist ideology would prefer it to be.

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[45] Ibid., p. 72. Yet Lösche tried to blame 'bourgeois' historians for having generalized too readily from correct local studies!

[46] Manfred Bensing, Thomas Müntzer und der Thüringer Aufstand 1525 (Berlin, 1965).

C. Peasant War and Frühbürgerliche Revolution

In Chapter V it was noted that Engels reached the conclusion that 16th-century Germany had witnessed the first stage in the bourgeois revolution only some time after he had written his *Bauernkrieg*.[49]

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[47] *Ibid.*, p. 145.

[48] *Ibid.*

[49] See above, pp. 233-36.

Consequently, the role which the peasants were to play in this perspective had not been delineated in his study. But he did note here that the peasants had been unable to produce a national peasant uprising alone in Germany before 1525 for they had been opposed by the united opposition of the princes, nobles, and the cities, the centers of the rising bourgeoisie. Only in alliance with another class could the peasants have emerged victorious, but with whom should they ally themselves?[50] A little farther on he pointed to the fact that as the Reformation progressed two major parties emerged out of the national opposition to the Roman Catholic Church: the bourgeois-moderate Lutheran reform party, and the revolutionary peasant and pre-proletariat party. These were opposed by the conservative Catholic party, the reactionary exponent of feudalism.[51] The pre-proletariat 'party,' however, had as yet appeared only as an appendage of the peasant movement. Only in Mühlhausen under the leadership of Thomas Müntzer had it gained control of the revolutionary movement, but even here only momentarily.[52]

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[50] Engels, "Bauernkrieg," M/E, Werke, VII, 340.

[51] Ibid., p. 347.

[52] Ibid., p. 339.

The question that is of interest here, however, is: what did Engels consider the relationship between the bourgeoisie and the peasants to be? Engels considered the bourgeoisie to have been the ". . . natural allies . . ."[53] of the peasants in 1525 for both groups had been fighting against feudalism. Yet he had to admit that their interests had in fact not been the same. The bourgeoisie had wanted reforms of a legal nature; their demands were, therefore, more moderate.[54] The peasants, however, had made more radical demands for change which the bourgeoisie could not share.[55] Thus, although the bourgeoisie should have been the natural ally of the revolutionary peasant, the latter had had to ally himself with the pre-proletariat, the most radical element just beginning to emerge in the cities. In some instances, however, the pre-proletariat proved to be even too radical for the peasants.[56]

The precise nature of the role the peasants were to play in the Reformation still remained unclear, however, because Engels had not yet formulated the true nature of this revolutionary period. Therefore, he could still say in 1873:

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[53] Ibid., p. 413.

[54] Ibid., p. 337.

[55] Ibid., p. 413.

[56] Ibid.

> The German bourgeoisie made its revolution which, in keeping with the ideology of the times, appeared in religious guise in the form of the Reformation. But how lousy! Without the knights of the realm and the peasants it was impossible for them to succeed. However, all three estates were unable to unite because of their mutually exclusive interests: the knights were often city robbers . . . and oppressors of the peasants, and the cities were equally exploiters of the peasants . . . . The knights rise in revolt first, are left in the lurch by the bourgeoisie, go under, the peasants rise in revolt and are directly opposed by the bourgeoisie . . . .[57]

In the early 1880's, however, he had already reached the conclusion that the "Reformation--Lutheran and Calvinistic--had been the Revolution No. 1 of the bourgeoisie in which the Peasant War was the most critical episode . . . ."[58] And in 1892 he made explicit the meaning of the above statement when he made the observation that the peasants in ". . . the great Peasant's War . . . [of 1525 were defeated] *chiefly in consequence of the indecision of the parties most interested, the burghers of the towns* . . . [my italics]."[59] It had therefore become clear to Engels that since the Reformation had in reality been an early stage of the bourgeois revolution the burghers of the cities should have been the party most interested in winning the Peasant War because only with the aid of the peasants could they have won their own revolution in their present state of immaturity. The burghers, however, had failed to recognize with any clarity where their 'true' interest had lain. Therefore both classes had been doomed to defeat, for neither could have won the battle alone.

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[57] Engels, "Notizen über Deutschland," *Zur deutschen Geschichte*, p. 563.

[58] Given in M/E, *Werke*, XXI, 402.

[59] Engels, "Socialism: Utopian and Scientific," *On Religion*, p. 265.

In the process of evolving his theory of the *frühbürgerliche Revolution*, however, Engels came into conflict with the conclusions reached in his *Bauernkrieg*. Here he had stated that the bourgeoisie had opposed the peasants rather than make common cause with them because their 'real' interests had not been the same as those of the peasants. Yet seen in the larger context of the Marxist theory of history, these interests should have been the same. Engels faced the same problem here we have seen him face in the previous chapter: the facts did not fit the theory. Rather than sacrifice the theory, however, Engels preferred to blame the bourgeoisie for their indecision and their failure to recognize their 'true' interests.[60] In the process, however, the peasants were robbed of the individuality of their struggle and made to play an assisting role in the bourgeois drama.

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[60] The argument that the bourgeoisie failed to recognize its 'true' interests is a very specious argument indeed, for this is true only according to the Marxist theory. If we do away with the theory, however, we come to an altogether different conclusion.

Neither Bebel, Kautsky, nor even Mehring saw the Reformation and the Peasant War within this larger context.[61] They all realized that Luther, the representative of the bourgeoisie, had turned against the peasants and had become a princely hireling, but none of them grasped what Engels had been driving at in his notes and letters regarding the reworking of his Bauernkrieg. It was only with the beginnings of Marxist historiography in Russia that the problem became acute as was noted in the previous chapter. Smirin recognized the problem once again; but his attempt to solve it failed. He stated that, in the final analysis, the peasant wars of the 15th and 16th centuries had been directed against the feudal system. The peasant programs of the time had set broad enough goals to be able to include all the anti-feudal groups. Yet he had to confess that the Peasant War of 1525 had been lost because of the 'unique character' of the German bourgeoisie.[62] Although there had been 'progressive' elements among this bourgeoisie, the Peasant War had demonstrated its weakness as a class and for this reason it had not been in a position to ". . . lead the popular movement in a consistent and energetic war against the feudal reaction and in the final analysis betrayed the interests of the masses."[63]

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[61] ". . . Durch diese Arbeiten wurde Engels zum Begründer der Auffassung von Reformation und Bauernkrieg als frühbürgerliche Revolution--auch wenn er diesen Begriff selbst noch nicht gebraucht hat. Die sozialdemokratische Historiographie hat wenig neue Erkenntnisse hinzugeweonnen, wohl aber vieles abgeschwächt; das gilt für Bebels Buch . . . auch für Kautsky . . . Auch Mehring hat nicht mehr getan, als die Erkenntnisse von Engels weiterzugeben . . . Erst der sowjetische Historiker M.M. Smirin hat die Erkenntnisse von Engels weitergeführt und vertieft . . . ." Max Steinmetz, "Über den Charakter der Reformation und des Bauernkrieges in Deutschland," WZdKM, 14 (1965), 3, 390-91.

[62] Smirin, Deutschland vor der Reformation, p. 378.

Chaikovskaia, however, as was noted in the previous chapter, disagreed with Smirin as to the nature of the relationship between Peasant War and Reformation. She believed one would have to demonstrate that the German cities had participated in the Peasant War in order to prove the thesis of the early bourgeois nature of the 16th century revolution. In reality, however, only the pre-proletariat of some cities had participated in the Peasant War and not the bourgeoisie insofar as one could speak of this at that time.[64] Therefore, she believed the Peasant War not to have been an integral part of the early bourgeois revolution, rather it had only been a Peasant War in the period of emerging capitalism.[65]

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[63] Ibid., pp. 379-80.

[64] Chaikovskaia, "Vopros o kharaktere Reformatsii i Krestianskoi voine v Germanii v sovietskoi istorigrafii poslednich let," VI, 12 (1956), 141.

[65] Ibid., p. 142.

In an answering article Smirin defended his and Engels' position and attempted to point to bourgeois elements that had participated in the Peasant War.[66] But he was countered by A.D. Epstein who pointed out that Smirin himself had demonstrated that the city magistrates and the so-called bourgeoisie of the cities had played a traitorous role in the Peasant War. In point of fact, the cities had demonstrated a pro-feudal dispostion rather than a revolutionary pro-peasant tendency. Even Engels had pointed to the fact that the cities had been just as active in exploiting the peasants as the feudal lords.[67] In agreement with Alfred von Martin's[68] conclusions, Epstein pointed to the 'social dynamic of a bourgeoisie which had become conservative' and had tried to ape the feudal style of living and rise to a noble status in life. This kind of a bourgeoisie had not participated in a war on the side of the peasants.[69]

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[66] Smirin, "O kharaktere ekonomcheskogo podiema i revolutionnogo dvishenia v Germanii v epochu Reformatsii," VI, 6 (1957), 84-101.

[67] Epstein, "K voprosu o Reformatsii i Krestianskoi voine v Germanii kak piervoi bourgeoisoi revolutsii," VI, 8 (1957), 118-42.

[68] Alfred von Martin, Soziologie der Renaissance (Frankfurt/M, 1949).

[69] Epstein, op. cit., p. 141.

Grugorian added nothing to this aspect of the discussion in his article which followed that of Epstein.[70] Macek, however, gave the entire problem a new perspective. Rather than attempt to demonstrate that the bourgeoisie had in fact participated in the struggle on the side of the peasants, or had even led the peasants in the war, Macek saw the Peasant War as a form of bourgeois revolution quite apart from any bourgeois revolutionary movments in the cities. Chaikovskaia had tried to place the Peasant War of 1525 on a level with other peasant wars before it and thus separate it from the parallel bourgeois movements in the cities and from the ideology of Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin. The point of departure for Macek's argumentation was the following quotation from Engels: ". . . Everywhere where the personal relationship was replaced by a money relationship, the payment in kind replaced by payment in money, there arose bourgeois relationships in place of feudal relationships . . . ."[71] This process took place on the land as well as in the cities and as a result one could find the repeated demand in the peasant articles to abolish serfdom and replace the personal-bond relationship with a money-rent relationship. The battle of the peasants, therefore, had been a battle to establish a new bourgeois economic order.[72] Thus, in all three parallel aspects of the early bourgeois revolution--the Peasant War, the attempts of the bourgeoisie in the cities to gain political power, and in the ideological battle of Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin against the ideology of the feudalized Church--the same bourgeois 'revolutionary process' had been at work.[73]

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[70] Grugorian, "K voprosu ob ûrovne ekonomiki, o kharaktere Reformatsii i Krestianskoi voine v Germanii," VI, 1 (1958), 123-29.

[71] J. Macek, "K diskuissii o kharaktere Reformatsii i Krestianskoi voine v Germanii," VI, 3 (1958), 118.

But Macek had not really answered the question of the relationship of the Peasant War to the bourgeois revolution in Engels' terms and Stam recognized this clearly enough in the last of the Slavic articles on this question.[74] It was not a question of parallel movements; it was a question of a united effort of peasants and bourgeoisie. Stam, therefore, stated that the great anti-feudal uprising of the peasants in 1525 had given the German bourgeoisie the brilliant opportunity to unite with the peasants and to change Germany into a bourgeois nation.[75] There had been revolutionary groups within the bourgeoisie before the Peasant War which had made common cause with the insurgent peasants, and even during the great Peasant War of 1525 the bourgeoisie in many of the smaller German cities, goaded into action by the pre-proletariat, had joined the peasants in their war. On the whole, however, the bourgeoisie proved itself incapable of fulfilling its obligation in the frühbürgerliche Revolution, demonstrated great vacillations in its attitude toward the peasants, and in the final analysis the greater part had joined Luther in betraying the peasant cause.[76]

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[72] Ibid., p. 119.

[73] Ibid., pp. 119-21.

[74] The discussion was discontinued by the editors of Voprosi Istorii with a promise of a final summation. This final summation did not appear, however. See Max Steinmetz, "Über den Charakter der Reformation und des Bauernkrieges in Deutschland," WZdKMU, p. 391.

Stam turned specifically against Chaikovskaia's interpretation of the 16th-century Germany as that of a Peasant War in the period of emerging capitalism. He accused her of reviving the outdated liberal conception of the Reformation as a bourgeois-Lutheran movement which had had social and political consequences but which had not really been a social and political movement. Were this conception correct, he continued, then Müntzer would indeed appear to be a dreamer without any 'real' basis for his actions as bourgeois historians had long maintained. Engels, however, had ranged Müntzer with the heroic fighters for the liberation of the

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[75] Stam, "Chem zhe v Deistvitelnosti bila Reformatsia v Germanii?" VI, 4 (1958), 102.

[76] Ibid., p. 103.

German masses, Smirin had confirmed this view, and this was sufficient for Stam.[77] To deny the Marxist concept of the Reformation era as an early stage of the bourgeois revolution would of necessity lead back to the typical separation of Peasant War and Reformation in bourgeois historiography; and this, in turn, would then lead to the bourgeois interpretation of the Reformation as essentially an intellectual movement.[78]

This 'reactionary' and 'retrogressive' tendency in 'progressive' Marxist historiography would, of course, never do. But, as Dietrich Lösche pointed out,[79] the problem in the Slavic discussion of the topic was not only that the knowledge about the socio-economic conditions of the masses was too fragmentary, but especially that,

> . . . we lack recent, comprehensive studies regarding the popular movements in the cities which have been badly neglected as compared with the Peasant War itself, despite the fact that precisely such studies could inform us better about the nature of the Reformation as a social movement of the bourgeoisie than the peasant uprisings . . . .[80]

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[77] *Ibid.*, p. 106.

[78] *Ibid.*, p. 113.

[79] Dietrich Lösche, "'Achtmänner, Ewiger Bund Gottes und Ewiger Rat,' Zur Geschichte der revolutionären Bewegung in Mühlhausen i. Th. 1523 bis 1525," *Jahrbuch für Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, 1 (1960), 135-60.

[80] *Ibid.*, p. 135.

Although Lösche concluded his own study by stating that the Kleinbürgertum together with the pre-proletariat under Müntzer had gained control of Mühlhausen, he failed to trace the relationship of this group, which, according to Lösche, did not belong to the bourgeoisie, to the peasant uprising in the surrounding territory.[81] Only one year before, however, Hanna Köditz had investigated just this problem and had come to the conclusion that the 'bourgeoisie' in the city of Mühlhausen had exploited the surrounding peasants to such a degree that these had not joined them in the early stages of revolt.[82]

In his theses Steinmetz restated the fundamental Marxist position once again: the frühbürgerliche Revolution could have achieved its aim—the formation of a unified national state—had it had a leadership conscious of and willing to fulfill its historical duty. History had ordained the bourgeoisie for this particular task at this moment; but the city bourgeoisie had failed to heed the call of history.[83] At the Congress of East German historians at Wernigerode, gathered to discuss the problems of the frühbürgerliche Revolution, Steinmetz elaborated on this theory.[84]

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[81] Ibid., pp. 159-60.

[82] "Diese Zahlen lassen erkennen, wie stark vor allem die Bauern von der Stadt bzw. von den reichen Bürgern ausgebeutet wurden und wie viel schlechter ihre Lage war als die der Bürger und Vorstädter. Zweifelles war diese Ausbeutung ein wichtiger Faktor, der die merkwürdige Tatsache erklärt, warum sich die Bauern des Mühlhäuser Territoriums so passiv gegenüber der Bewegung des Jahres 1523/24 verblieben . . . ." Hanna Köditz, Volksbewegung in Mühlhausen, p. 39.

In what was obviously intended to be a concluding summation, Smirin advised his readers to avoid the practice of calling all the 16th-century bourgeoisie traitors in the future;[85] he had nothing to say about the role of the peasants in the frühbürgerliche Revolution, however. Indeed, as the discussion continued in spite of Smirin's summation, the role of the peasants faded more and more into the background. Their role in the frühbürgerliche Revolution had never really been in doubt once the theory was formulated, it had been the revolutionary bourgeoisie the Marxists had sought in vain to lead these peasants. Thus Max Steinmetz, in his textbook, could put the peasants in their place with the following few chosen words: "As the 'fighting arm' in the hand of the progressive bourgeoisie the peasants played an important role in all bourgeois revolutions. This was even truer in Germany where the bourgeoisie still lacked to a great degree any kind of revolutionary energy . . . ."[86]

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[83] Steinmetz quoted the following passage from Dokumente der SED, vol. 5 (Berlin, 1956), p. 386: "Mit blutiger Gewalt konnte der Adel und die Kirchenfürsten die demokratische Bauernbewegung niederschlagen, weil sich die dazu historisch berufene nationale Kraft, das Bürgertum der Städte, nicht an die Spitze des Kampfes gegen den Feudalismus stellte. Allein gelassen und in sich zersplittert, konnte die Bauernschaft nicht über ihre Peiniger siegen." "Thesen," ZfG, 8 (1960), 1, 123.

[84] Steinmetz, "Probleme der frühbürgerlichen Revolution," Frühbürgerliche Revolution, pp. 46-49.

[85] Smirin, "Zu einigen Fragen der Geschichte der deutschen Reformation," La Renaissance et la Reformation, p. 232.

D. The Nature of the Peasant and Müntzer's Leadership

Zimmermann had divided the peasants into two groups: a more conservative wing centered particularly in Southern Germany and interested mainly in abolishing existing abuses, and a more radical wing which aimed at the overthrow of the existing social order, centered primarily in Thuringia under the leadership of Müntzer but which could be found in all other regions as a result of the propaganda and revolutionary agitation of Müntzer and his Anabaptist disciples. The aims of the conservative wing had been contained in the Twelve Articles while the Artikelbrief had given expression to the aims of the radical wing. Although Zimmermann believed Müntzer to have exercised a decisive influence on the formulation even of the Twelve Articles, these were too conservative to have come directly from his pen. The Artikelbrief, however, had unquestionably been written by Müntzer. Engels drew the same line of division.[87] The revolutionary 'Müntzer-party' had infiltrated the whole movement, yet everywhere it remained in the minority. Led by Anabaptists and other emissaries,[88] this radical party formed the core of the entire peasant movement and aimed at a complete overthrow of the ruling classes.[89]

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[86] Steinmetz, Deutschland 1476-1648, p. 128.

If one had pressed Zimmermann, he would have been forced to admit that the conservative wing of the peasant movement had been backward-looking for he asserted it had advocated primarily the abolition of abuses. Engels, however, would have argued, and indeed did argue, that both wings were progressive for both had been fighting against feudalism. For this reason it should also have been welcomed as an ally by the emerging bourgeois class. Müntzer and his party, of course, had been far in advance of their time in that Müntzer had anticipated the classless society.

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[87] Engels, "Bauernkrieg," M/E, Werke, VII, 378-79.

[88] Ibid., p. 383.

[89] Ibid., p. 381.

Not everyone agreed with Engels, however. Lassalle, also a Socialist, but not caught in the Marxist dogmatic straightjacket, believed the whole peasant movement to have been reactionary. In 1859 he wrote a drama entitled Franz von Sickingen and sent copies to Marx and Engels for their criticism. Marx answered first on April 19, 1859, and pointed out that Sickingen had not really been a fitting subject for a revolutionary drama. He complained that Lassalle had made the error of placing the Lutheran-knightly opposition above the plebian-Müntzer one. Lassalle should rather have emphasized the peasant movement and the revolutionary city elements more. In this way he could have allowed the modern ideas in their most naïve form to speak for themselves.[90]

Engels sent his criticism of May 18, 1859. He, too, believed that Lassalle had neglected the peasant and the rather colorful pre-proletarian movements. With these as a background, the revolt of Sickingen would have been placed in its correct perspective. Lassalle, however, had intimated that Sickingen had even been prepared to join forces with the peasants. Engels could not agree, for he viewed the problem differently: the knights had never really even dreamt of forming an alliance with the peasants because they existed from the very suppression of these peasants. An alliance with the cities would have been more probable, but even this was achieved only in isolated instances.

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[90] M/E, Werke, XXIX, 591-92.

From this letter it also becomes very clear that Engels could think only in terms of classes and their representatives.[91] That individuals like Sickingen could ever rise above their class position and play an historical role not in accord with these class interests did not interest him.[92] Exceptions did not interest him for in order to capture the essence of history the great historical movements had to be stressed, and the most progressive movement of the time had been the peasant-plebian movement as Marx had pointed out.

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[91] ". . . Ihr 'Sickingen' ist durchaus auf der richtigen Bahn; die handelnden Hauptpersonen sind Repräsentanten bestimmter Klassen und Richtungen, sommit bestimmter Gedanken ihrer Zeit, und finden ihre Motive nich in kleinlichen individuellen Gelüsten, sondern eben in der historischen Strömung, von der sie getragen werden . . . ." *Ibid.*, p. 601.

[92] ". . . Inwiefern Ihre Annahme, dass Sickingen mit den Bauern wirklich in einiger Verbindung gestanden, historisch begründet ist, kann ich nicht beurteilen, *darauf kommt es auch gar nicht an* [my italics] . . . ." *Ibid.*, p. 604. To this problem Lassalle answered: ". . . Hierin liegt die ganz richtige Einsicht von Engels, dass ich das *Individuum* Sickingen, nicht aber seine *Klasse* über ihre Klassenzwecke hinausheben durfte . . . ." Lassalle to Marx and Engels, May 27, 1859. Franz Mehring, ed., *Aus dem literarischen Nachlass von Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels und Ferdinand Lassalle* (Stuttgart, 1913), IV, 167. (Hereafter cited as *Nachlass*.)

Lassalle recognized the central problem immediately,[93] and in his conclusion he stated:

> Strictly speaking, your objections in this respect may be reduced to nothing less than the objection Plato and Aristotle already rejected with regard to the drama: not that this, that, or the other aspect is wrong or poorly expressed, but that I did not produce a different tragedy. In the final analysis your objections are reduced to the fact that I wrote a 'Franz von Sickingen' and not a 'Thomas Münzer' or some other Peasant War tragedy . . . .[94]

The reasons for Marx and Engels' objections were, stated Lassalle, first of all, that members of the party should write only in the interests of the party, in no way could the party be served through the glorification of reactionary heroes like Sickingen who represented a decaying class; secondly, the belief, expounded by Marx and Engels, that the Peasant War had been progressive. This latter belief, however, was wrong: ". . . the Peasant Wars were not of a nature you would like to give them. They were much more a) not revolutionary; b) but even in the highest degree—in the final analysis—reactionary, just as reactionary as the historical Sickingen (not mine) and the historical knights themselves were."[95] The peasants had merely demanded the abolition of existing abuses, not the abuses of the status quo, hence they had not been revolutionary. What was more, the peasants had been defeated precisely because they had been reactionary.[96] Were the peasant wars to be utilized for the purpose Marx and Engels wanted to use them one should not investigate them too closely but rather allow them to remain in the twilight realm of historical research.[97] One could certainly not call a movement progressive which had suffered defeat because of the total indifference one group had for another, whose egoism, particularism, and narrow-mindedness had been without parallel.[98]

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[93] Lassalle wrote a lengthy rebuttal on May 27, 1859. This letter, however, is not contained in M/E, Werke. For some reason the editors decided to omit it.

[94] Mehring, Nachlass, p. 173.

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[95] *Ibid.*, p. 174.

[96] *Ibid.*, pp. 174-75.

[97] ". . . Die Bauernkriege müssen also, sollen sie in Eurem und meinem Sinne verwendet werden, in einem gewissen Zwielicht bleiben und dürfen nicht zu nahe betrachtet werden . . . ." *Ibid.*, p. 176.

Bebel, however, returned to Zimmermann's and Engels' position, maintaining that there had been two wings in the peasant movement, one radical and another more conservative. The radical had been led by Müntzer and his Anabaptist disciples whereas the great majority of the movement had consisted of a vacillating, undecided mass that could be driven to radical measures only when there seemed to be no other way out of a situation.[99] Kautsky, however, who knew that at least the Anabaptists in Switzerland had not been revolutionary, still maintained that Müntzer's influence had reached far beyond

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[98] Ibid. The only answer Marx gave was in a letter of June 10, 1859, to Engels: ". . . Heute zwei Manuskripte erhalten. Ein famoses, Deins über 'Fortification' . . . Ein groteskes, nämlich ein Replik von Lassalle an mich und Dich über seinen 'Sickingen.' Ein ganzer Wald von enggeschriebenen Seiten. Unbegreiflich, wie ein Mensch in dieser Jahreszeit und unter diesen welthistorischen Zuständen nicht nur selbst Zeit findet, solcherlei von sich zu geben, sondern uns sogar die Zeit zumutet es zu lesen." M/E, Werke, XXIX, 450.

[99] Bebel, Bauernkrieg, p. 139.

Thuringia.[100] He did not argue so much for Müntzer's personal influence as he argued that Müntzer had remained in contact with the leaders in Southern Germany by means of wandering apostles who had belonged to the communistic sects and were spreading incendiary teachings on Germany's all too fertile soil.[101] These had belonged to Müntzer's secret Bund. The proof for this theory Kautsky found in the same passage from Bullinger, Zimmermann had cited.[102] Since, however, Kautsky was primarily interested in Müntzer and his Mühlhausen activities he failed to enter into the broader aspects of Müntzer's relationship to the Peasant War.

Mehring, who edited the letters of Lassalle, Marx, and Engels to one another, returned to the problem whether or not the Peasant War had been progressive. In agreement with Marx and Engels, Mehring asserted that the peasant demands of 1525 had indeed been in accord with the progressive nature of the bourgeois period. In fact, the peasants of 1525 had demanded essentially the same things as the French peasants of 1789.[103]

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[100] Kautsky, Vorläufer, p. 66.

[101] Ibid., p. 72. Kautsky drew this theory from Ludwig Keller, although the latter had merely stated that the Anabaptists were probably a continuation of the medieval heretical sects. See Chapter IX.

[102] Ibid., p. 78.

[103] Mehring, Deutsche Geschichte, p. 47.

The interest in Marxist historiography of the Peasant War, however, shifted away from the problem of the nature of this war as such more and more to the role Thomas Müntzer had played in it. Primarily, this indicated a desire to prove the Zimmermann-Engels thesis of Müntzer's influence in the radical wing of the peasant movement. Bloch argued more for an intellectual influence over the peasants and Anabaptists in Southern Germany and Switzerland respectively rather than that Müntzer had actually been personally influential in inciting the revolt.[104] Meusel, however, went back to Engels's theory of Müntzer's Anabaptist emissaries, asserting, as had Engels before him, that these emissaries had played a not unimportant role in the genesis of revolution in the south. Especially important had been Hubmaier and Grebel, the disciples of Müntzer.[105] The crowning achievement, however, was Smirin's study of Müntzer and his Volksreformation. In lengthy passages Smirin attempted to demonstrate that the leading ideas of the revolt in Southern Germany had been those of Müntzer's radical Volksreformation. These ideas had emanated from the town of Waldshut where Müntzer's disciple, Balthasar Hubmaier, had been preacher.[106] The ultimate source of Smirin's argumentation, however, proved to be a certain A. Stern[107] and the latter's own source, Heinrich Bullinger.[108] In order to make obvious the influence of Müntzer over Hubmaier, Smirin compared their ideas but was forced to conclude that although this influence was beyond doubt, yet Hubmaier's thought differed from that of Müntzer in that it lacked the latter's will to social change through radical revolution.[109]

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[104] Bloch, Thomas Münzer, pp. 63-65.

[105] Meusel, Thomas Müntzer, p. 162.

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[106] Smirin, Volksreformation, pp. 327-59, 362.

[107] A. Stern, Über die Zwölf Artikel der Bauern (Leipzig, 1868).

[108] Smirin, Volksreformation, pp. 364-67.

[109] Ibid., pp. 392-400. Smirin concluded with the following words: ". . . Hubmaier schloss sich jedoch Münzer nicht an. Er übernahm nur einige Seiten der münzerschen revolutionären Lehre, ohne dessen grosse Pläne und Ziele zu teilen . . . ," p. 400.

The influence of Müntzer upon the revolt in the region of the Swiss-German border was established not only through Hubmaier's activity, however. The widespread similarity between the revolutionary ideas in this region with those of Müntzer pointed to another source. Smirin warned that the sources were perfectly quiet about any personal or organizational role Müntzer might have played in this region.[110] Nevertheless, since it was manifest that the Artikelbrief had been written, if not by Müntzer himself, then by one of his closest associates, and since this document had been spread to various places by Anabaptists fleeing from Zurich,[111] it was evident that Müntzer's ideas had formed the core of radical revolutionary resistance everywhere.[112]

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[110] Ibid., p. 436.

[111] Ibid., p. 522.

[112] Ibid., p. 437. His source again, was primarily Bullinger. See p. 435.

The same theme was taken up by Steinmetz in his textbook. Yet a difference had crept in. Smirin had stressed that Müntzer's radical party had consisted of peasants and plebians. The discussions on the nature of the frühbürgerliche Revolution in Germany had demonstrated, however, that unless one could speak of a bourgeois element in the peasant movement there was no justification for calling it the first phase of the bourgeois revolution.[113] Steinmetz, therefore, insisted that the radical bourgeoisie had indeed belonged to Müntzer's party.[114] But he had to give up the idea of Müntzer's connection with the Anabaptists of Zurich, at least insofar as these could have served as Müntzer's agents in the Peasant War, for he stated that the Zurich Anabaptists had categorically rejected any use of force.[115] Hubmaier, however, was still reckoned as one of the fold.[116] Bensing, writing one year later could therefore admit that Engels had been in error when he assumed that the Anabaptists had served as Müntzer's emissaries.[117]

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[113] This is the reason why Gerhard Brendler could argue for an extension of Smirin's concept of a Volksreformation in the following words: "Zu überprüfen wäre dabei auch, ob der von M.M. Smirin geprägte und auf Thomas Müntzer angewendete Begriff der 'Volksreformation' schon von seinem Wortsinn her auf andere Erscheinungen neben Müntzer Anwendung finden müsste, z.B. auf Michael Gaismair und die kämpferischen Melchioriten. Eine solche Überlegung scheint besonders insofern angebracht zu sein, als Smirin ja in seinem Müntzer-Buch die Qualität 'frühbürgerliche Revolution' im Grunde genommen auf den Bauernkrieg und Thomas Müntzer beschränkt, die Diskussion in den 'Voprossy istorii' und in der DDR jedoch zu der Erkenntnis geführt haben, dass Reformation und Bauernkrieg eine untrennbare Einheit darstellen und gerade in ihrer Einheit zu einer frühen Form der bürgerlichen Revolution geworden sind . . . ." Das Täuferreich zu Münster, pp. 62-63.

[114] Steinmetz, Deutschland 1476-1648, p. 102.

E. Criticism

A number of questions of a general nature have been raised by the Marxist interpretation of the Reformation in this and the foregoing chapters. These, together with the basic question concerning the bourgeois nature of Reformation and Peasant War, will be answered in Chapter X when we will have discussed other more specific questions as those regarding the roles of Müntzer, Luther, and the Anabaptists in this bourgeois revolution. In the concluding section

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[114] Steinmetz, Deutschland 1476-1648, p. 102.

[115] Ibid., p. 166.

[116] Ibid., p. 130.

[117] Bensing, Thomas Müntzer, p. 133.

of this chapter, however, it is necessary to come to grips with the problem of the causes of the Peasant War.

The causes of the Peasant War in the period of transition from feudalism to capitalism have been portrayed by the Marxists as being either a relative or even an absolute deterioration of the economic and social status of the peasantry. In a footnote we saw how Engels had attempted to explain away Maurer's arguments to the contrary.[118] On the other hand, however, the Marxists have argued that the bourgeoisie, which was on the rise economically and socially, should have revolted against the feudal lords in order to consolidate political power in its hands. With regard to the bourgeoisie, therefore, they use precisely the same argument non-Marxist historians use to explain the revolt of a peasantry they believe enjoyed a relatively high economic as well as social status, numerous indications to the contrary notwithstanding.[119] Yet with regard to the peasants they disdain to use this argument. Bensing, who was forced to admit that he had found wealthy landholding peasants in the ranks of even Müntzer's revolutionaries in the few random investigations he had undertaken, argued that these had joined the revolution because they had feared an attack on their property rights by the nobles.[120] But even this is not a satisfying answer, for in most cases the wealthier peasants not only participated in the revolt but were the leaders of the revolt in many regions.[121]

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[118] See above, n. 16.

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[119] "Es ist nicht zu umgehen, an dieser Stelle auf die vielerörterte Frage nach den Ursachen des Bauernkrieges einzugehen, insbesondere auf die Frage nach der wirtschaftlichen Lage des Bauernstandes vor 1525. Zu dieser Frage liegt zahlreiche Literatur vor. Der Ausgangspunkt dieser Arbeiten ist im wesentlichen stets derselbe: man fand zahlreiche Zeugnisse für ein Steigen des Bauernstandes im Mittelalter und für eine relative Wohlhabenheit um 1500-1520. Das schien sich mit dem Ausbruch des Bauernkrieges und den verschiedenen vorausgehenden Empörungen im 15. Jahrhundert nicht in Übereinstimmung bringen zu lassen, da dieser als Ausbruch aus drückender Not aufgefasst werden zu müssen schien. Um diesem Konflikt zu entgehen liessen sich drei Wege anschlagen: 1. konnte man Aufstieg und Wohlhabenheit der Bauern dieser Tage ganz leugnen, oder 2. begrenzte man diesen Zustand der Wohlhabenheit mit 1400 oder 1450 und glaubte einen dazu neu einsetzenden Druck wirtschaftlicher, sozialer oder politischer Art als entscheidende Ursache nachweisen zu können, oder 3. man unterstrich die nach wie vor gute Lage der Bauern um 1500 und machte für die Entstehung des Bauernkrieges _nur_ die religiös-soziale Bewegung verantwortlich, die man mehr oder weniger enge Verbindung mit Luther und der Reformation im eigentlichen Sinne brachte. Den letzten Weg ging am klarsten Johannes Janssen. Er hat den wirtschaftlichen Wohlstand des Bauern und Bürgers am Ende des Mittelalters und besonders im ersten Viertel des 16. Jahrhunderts an so zahlreichen Belegen nachgewiesen, dass daran kein Zweifel mehr sein kann. Das gilt nicht nur von der wirtschaftlichen, sondern auch von der sozialen Lage des Bauern und damit in Verbindung von seiner steigenden geistigen Regsamkeit . . . ." Adolf Waas, "Die grosse Wendung im deutschen Bauernkrieg," _Historische Zeitschrift_, 159 (1939), 22-23. (Hereafter this journal is cited as _HZ_.)

Although non-Marxist historians are divided as to the fundamental cause of the Peasant War, they are in agreement that one cannot approach the problem from a mono-causal perspective as the Marxists do. They do not deny that the deterioration of conditions did not play a part, they are only divided as to what role this deterioration actually played. A different factor seen as equally if not more important than the economic factor is the fear and uncertainty which came upon the peasant when the hereditary German 'common law' was being replaced by the Roman law. To counteract this innovation, the peasant attempted to revive the 'old law' which, because of its hallowed, immemorial nature, in time became 'God's law' and, as far as the peasants were concerned, was validated by the Reformation and Luther's teachings. For the peasant the problem was a very real one for when he appeared in the court of his lord the law he was used to no longer applied and could not be used to defend his rights against the encroachment of his lord. Hence he was left with the uneasy feeling that he was at the absolute mercy of his master. Closely bound together with the introduction of Roman law was the concept of a centralized territorial state, the realization of which entailed the destruction of the old system of communal village law. These processes, the introduction of Roman law and the attempts to erect centralized principalities, were most noticeable in the southwestern regions of Germany where the revolt broke out.[122]

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[120] Bensing, Thomas Müntzer, p. 145.

[121] Waas, "Die grosse Wendung," p. 25. See also: F.L. Carsten, "Der Bauernkrieg in Ostpreussen 1525," International Review of Social History, III (1938), 407; and G. Franz, Bauernkrieg, p. 287.

The problem, which of these two major factors played the greater role, is a thorny one for it would entail a thorough investigation of the total economic situation, not only of the peasants but of all other estates of the realm, and this not only of the 16th century but of the preceding centuries as well, were one to attempt to give a satisfactory answer to the question of the peasant conditions. One would have to determine the buying power of the peasant as compared not only with his buying power in previous decades and centuries but also with the buying power of the other estates in the same periods. For a study of this nature, however, the sources give too little information. Thus, in spite of Günther Franz's comprehensive study, the discussion regarding the causes of the Peasant War goes on.[123]

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[122] Franz, Bauernkrieg, pp. 291-93.

But there are other factors which played their role as well. Kurt Uhrig has pointed to the growing self-confidence of the 'Lutheran' peasant during the early years of the Reformation, a self-confidence nourished through Luther's writings and particularly through his concept of the priesthood of all believers. The peasant saw himself as the supporter and propagator of the Lutheran Reformation[124] and it is interesting to note that despite Smirin's massive attempts to trace the influence of Müntzer on the various regions of the Peasant War, his name is neither mentioned in these pamphlets nor in the list of arbiters nominated by the peasants in Twelve Articles. This self-confidence, especially amongst the wealthier peasants, may well have encouraged the peasants to assert themselves and demand what they considered justly theirs.

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[123] ". . . Wohl aber muss man zugeben, dass gerade die ländliche Wirtschaftsgeschichte des 15. Jahrhunderts noch wenig ausgebaut ist; die Voraussetzungen für eine zusammenfassende Darstellung, namentlich im Hinblick auf die Bauernaufstände des ausgehenden Mittelalters, sind nur in ungenügendem Masse vorhanden . . . ." H. Wopfner, "Die Forschung nach den Ursachen des Bauernkrieges und ihre Förderung durch die Geschichtliche Volkskunde," HZ, 153 (1936), 93.

[124] Kurt Uhrig, "Der Bauer in der Publizistik der Reformation bis zum Ausgang des Bauernkrieges," ARG, XXXIII (1936), 70-125, 165-225.

Non-Marxist proponents of the socio-economic theory of causation, on the other hand, have pointed to the fact that besides a general deterioration of economic and social conditions for the peasant, a general shortage of arable land also posed a problem for the peasants at this time. Room for expansion or further settlement had ceased and an increasing peasant population found itself forced to hire out or move to the cities, but by this time the cities were reluctant to allow them to enter, or divide their land. Felix Ammer asserted that such a surplus of arable land in Bavaria had been a not unimportant reason for the peacefulness of the peasants there during the war.[125]

The burden of proof lies with the Marxists, however, for they have maintained that Germany as such experienced an economic upsurge at least until after 1525. If they intend to maintain this theory and argue that it was precisely for this reason that the bourgeoisie should have been revolutionary, and that Germany did in fact experience an early phase of the bourgeois revolution due to its economic status, then they will have to prove why the peasant did not participate in this general prosperity. If the peasants did participate in this prosperity, however, then they will at least have to modify their theory as to the causes of the Peasant War. And if they do not do either of these two things, then they will have to come up with an answer as to why the bourgeoisie should be revolutionary when it is on the rise economically and socially and the peasants revolutionary when their star was on the wane. To expound the generalities of Engels or even of Smirin on this topic will no longer do.

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[125] Felix Ammer, "Ein wirtschaftsgeschichtlicher Beitrag zur Sonderstellung Bayerns im deutschen Bauernkrieg 1525" (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Munich, 1943), pp. 24-39.

CHAPTER VII

MARTIN LUTHER

A. The Marxist Luther

Martin Luther's involvement in the German Peasant War of 1525 has been a topic of tireless controversy from his day to our own. From the very beginning there has been partisan disagreement concerning the reasons for, the justifiability and the consequences of Luther's involvement in the Peasant War. His actions have been viewed from the Catholic position, from the peasant perspective, and from the theological and political points of view. In most instances his stand has been condemned, in others it has been vigorously defended and his actions variously explained. Zimmermann, who praised Luther's revolutionary first phase, was severe in his criticism of what he termed Luther's reactionary period.

Zimmermann saw Luther's actions from a prejudiced perspective: from the partisan point of view of the peasants. This was the easier for Zimmermann since, from his own vaguely deistic religious position, he could arouse neither enthusiasm nor understanding in himself for Luther's own religious motivation and theological position. But it was precisely the simultaneous crisis in the social and religious life of Germany, and the interaction of the forces advocating social and religious change, that constituted the tragedy of Luther's involvement in the Peasant War. Zimmermann had no understanding for the crisis in Luther's own religious life, nor any real understanding of the religious struggle taking place in 16th-century Germany. He saw some of the political and social implications of teachings ill understood, but of the essence he understood little.

If Zimmermann, who was a Deist, understood very little of Luther's religious struggle and religious concern, the Marxists have demonstrated even less understanding, for they have seen, and still see, religion only as the fantastic reflection in the minds of men of the perverted social conditions here on earth. For this reason it has been impossible for them to appreciate, much less understand, Luther's religious concerns in the years of crisis. Nor have they departed from Zimmermann's prejudiced point of view; in fact, they have become bound even more firmly to it through their doctrine of *Parteilichkeit* for the proletariat.

Engels first discussed the problem of Luther's involvement in the Peasant War in a short article of 1843.[1] His later delineation of Luther, the revolutionary turned reactionary, which was created in direct dependence upon Zimmermann's study, is already contained in it.[2]

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[1] Engels, "Fortschritte der Sozialreform auf dem Kontinent," M/E, *Werke*, I, 488-89.

In his Bauernkrieg, Engels was to give a slightly different picture of Luther. Rather than state that Luther had begun as a Mann des Volkes, as he had in 1843, Engels now stated that when Luther had first decided to oppose the official teachings of the Roman Catholic Church, his teachings had had no definite characteristics of their own. In fact, these teachings had not gone beyond any of the previous 'bourgeois' heresies. Thus the way had been left open for development in a number of directions. It could not have been otherwise, continued Engels, for, in order to be able to overthrow the power of the Roman Catholic Church, all opposition had to be united; any merely sectarian movement must of necessity have failed to achieve this goal.[3] Thus it would seem that Engels believed Luther to be playing the opportunist, waiting to see which faction would be victorious in order then to join it.

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[2] ". . . es zeigt, dass er, der seine Laufbahn als Mann des Volkes begonnen hatte, nun ganz im Dienste seiner Unterdrücker stand . . . ." Ibid., p. 489.

[3] M/E, Werke, VII, 374.

Peasants, pre-proletarians, the bourgeoisie, the lesser nobility, and even some princes had at first joined the general opposition movement because each group had been able to read its own opposition into Martin Luther's opposition to the Roman Catholic Church. Engels did not credit Luther's new religious teachings with any powers of attraction in themselves for he asserted, that of the two oppositional groups which eventually emerged out of the initial group—the moderate Lutheran movement and the radical Müntzer movement—the one sought only to break the power of the established Church and enrich itself at the latter's expense while the other wanted only to free itself from a general oppression, an oppression both feudal and religious. Therefore the first group had been more conservative in its aims while the second group had been much more revolutionary, for it sought radical social change. With the emergence of these two parties out of the original one, Luther had to choose to which he should belong. He did not hesitate long, said Engels, for he turned his back on the popular movement and joined the princes, nobles, and bourgeoisie which constituted the more conservative group. Immediately Luther had made this decision, his demands for a radical war of destruction against Rome ceased and he began to preach change by peaceful evolution rather than by violent revolution.[4]

According to Engels, Luther chose to join the bourgeois party and began to preach lawful change because most of the cities, the lesser nobility, and a goodly number of the princes had begun to demand a more conservative reform movement. It had become ever clearer that the forces of conservatism would be victorious, at least in the greater part of Germany, as long as a course of peaceful evolution could be pursued. Open conflict with the Roman Catholic Church and its supporters could only have led to conflict with the peasants, and the alienation of many princes, nobles, and cities from the movement of gradual reform. Had the bourgeoisie allowed itself to be caught in the press between a radical left and a resurgent Catholic party, it would undoubtedly have been strangled.[5]

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[4] Ibid., p. 348.

[5] Ibid., p. 349. Engels obviously reads the predicament of the 1848 Liberals into Luther's position in the Peasant War. Engels himself stated in the 1870 Introduction to his Bauernkrieg: "Die Parallele zwischen der deutschen Revolution von 1525 und der von 1848/49 lag zu nahe, um damals ganz von der Hand gewiesen zu werden . . . ." Ibid., p. 532. Thus Engels not only used his 19th-century sociological categories to interpret the Reformation, he also saw it through the events of 1848.

It is this role, the role of the moderate attempting to avoid being destroyed by radical forces on either side, that Engels assigns to Luther in the latter's first attempt to mediate between the peasants and the princes. Since the Peasant War began in Southern Germany where the princes belonged nearly exclusively to the Roman Catholic Church, Luther's attempt to mediate was in reality an attempt to keep the moderate party from being crushed in the ensuing struggle.[6]

The attempts to mediate failed, however, and soon the peasants were at war with princes who had joined the Lutheran cause. This was not the time for Luther to continue negotiating for peace—this was the time for action. As a result of the revolt of the peasants against the Lutheran princes, Luther forgot his old enmity with the Catholics, joined hands with them, and turned against the peasants in inhuman savagery and fury.[7]

Luther had given the popular movement a powerful weapon in the German translation of the Bible, said Engels, following Zimmermann. From this same Bible Luther had drawn the picture of a primitive Christianity and compared it with the feudal Christianity of his own day; he had opposed the feudal society with the much simpler and non-hierarchical society of early Christianity.[8] It was only natural, then, that the peasants should pick up the weapon and use it for their own ends.[9] Now, however, toward the beginning of the Peasant War, Luther turned the Bible, the weapon he had used against the feudalized Church, against the peasants and demonstrated from it that one must obey the temporal powers without question. The validity of princely power by divine right, passive obedience to princely tyranny, yes, even the justification of slavery were now all proven from the same Bible by Luther. In doing so, Luther not only betrayed his own earlier position as well as the peasants, however, but also the bourgeois party whose representative he was.[10]

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[6] _Ibid._, p. 349.

[7] _Ibid._, p. 350.

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[8] If Luther had simply revived the picture of a non-feudal early Christianity, how did this fit into the ideology of the 16th-century bourgeoisie? Certainly social conditions were no longer the same. Engels himself had stated in another context that early Christianity had been the religion of slaves.

[9] Engels tacitly admits here that a change took place in the ideas as expressed by Luther and appropriated by the peasants.

Engels' delineation of Luther's role in the Peasant War was not simply a replica of Zimmermann's picture; certain aspects had been added. Like Zimmermann, however, he also saw Luther's action from the peasant point of view and therefore condemned the latter's support of the princes in the Peasant War.[11] It was this perspective, together with their common theory of historical progress, that determined the picture of Luther as the revolutionary turned reactionary. Engels went beyond Zimmermann's analysis, however, and, by means of his sociological categories, he was able, so he thought, to place Luther and his ideas into their social context.

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[10] M/E, Werke, VII, 351. Engels said of Luther: ". . . Jetzt kehrte Luther es [the Bible] gegen sie [peasants] und stellte aus der Bibel einen wahren Dithyrambus auf die von Gott eingesetzte Obrigkeit zusammen, wie ihn kein Tellerlecker der absoluten Monarchie je zustande gebracht hat . . . ."

[11] This comes out clearly in a passage where Engels states: ". . . Luther selbst wurde mehr und mehr ihr [the prince's] Knecht, und das Volk wusste sehr gut, was es tat, wenn es sagte, er sei ein Fürstendiener geworden wie die andern, und wenn es ihn in Orlamünde mit Steinwürfen verfolgte." Ibid., p. 349.

Thus Luther became the representative of the bourgeois class and Protestantism its ideology.

It was noted in the preceding chapter that the application of the Marxist sociological categories, developed from a criticism of 19th-century capitalistic society, to the social structure of 16th-century Germany had confused more than clarified. Engels now added to this confusion a distortion because his historical eyes were so dimmed by the events of 1848 and the failure of the radical cause that he could see all other events only through his own 1848 experiences.[12] As a result, Luther became the representative of the bourgeois ideology[13] and played exactly the same role as the bourgeoisie of 1848. But the aspect of Engels' interpretation of Luther that strikes one most forcefully is that neither Engels, nor Zimmermann upon whom he relied for his facts concerning Luther, really knew anything about the latter's theology or intellectual development and concerns. Yet despite this utter lack of knowledge—not to speak of lack of understanding—Engels highhandedly placed Luther into a class with the bourgeoisie of 1848 without the slightest regard for the changes that had taken place in intellectual history since that time.

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[12] Engels was constantly saying things like: ". . . Im ersten Moment mussten alle oppositionellen Elemente vereinigt, musste die entschiedenste revolutionäre Energie angewandt, musste die Gesamtmasse der bisherigen Ketzerei gegenüber der katholischen Rechtgläubigkeit vertreten werden. Geradeso waren unsere liberalen Bourgeois noch 1847 revolutionär, nannten sich Sozialisten und Kommunisten und schwärmten für die Emanzipation der Arbeiterklasse. Die kräftige Bauernnatur Luthers machte sich in dieser ersten Periode seines Auftretens in der ungestümsten Weise Luft." Ibid., p. 347. Or, after quoting Luther on slaughtering the peasants: "Geradeso sprachen unsere weiland sozialistischen und philanthropischen Bourgeois, als das Proletariat nach den Märztagen seinen Anteil an den Früchten des Sieges reklamieren kam." Ibid., p. 350. And yet again at the end of the passage on Luther: "Brauchen wir die Bourgeois zu nennen, die auch von dieser Verleugnung ihrer eignen Vergangenheit uns kürzlich wieder Beispiele gegeben haben?" Ibid., p. 351.

It is highly probable, on the other hand, that Engels could do this precisely because he had no knowledge of Luther's thought or his surrounding world of thought. Like Zimmermann, Engels saw only Luther's actions and the reaction to these actions by society—he did not understand why Luther acted the way he had. He saw, as had Zimmermann, that Luther had criticized the Church—sometimes vehemently—but he interpreted this as a criticism of feudalism and, consequently, Luther's whole thought as essentially a criticism of, or an attack on, feudalism. He realized that Luther had criticized the peasants and turned against them, yet he did not understand why Luther had done so. Engels saw fairly clearly what Luther had done, and from his perspective of sympathy for the peasants he reacted in characteristic fashion to this action, but he did not understand why Luther had acted as he had. Yet he thought he understood the why and the wherefore of Luther's actions, for he saw action as the result of 'ultimate' economic motivation and thought or ideas as furthest removed from this economic and social base but the result of it. Thus Engels could read Luther's thoughts without having read the thought of Luther and discover motives in him which Luther had not even recognized.[14]

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[13] "Luther und Münzer repräsentieren nach ihrer Doktrin [my italics] wie nach ihrem Charakter und ihrem Auftreten jeder seine Partei vollständig." *Ibid.*, p. 347. But what did Engels know of Luther's doctrine?

Not only Engels concerned himself with Luther and the Reformation, however, for Marx also gathered material for a history of Germany which was to place a heavy emphasis upon the 16th century. But he never came to write his history, having set up only a chronological table of events and dates which was to form the skeleton of the future history.[15] The excerpts contain little, if anything, of interpretive value and have, as a result, had very little influence on subsequent Marxist historiography of the Reformation. Marx did, however, add a new dimension to the Marxist interpretation of Luther. In his major work, Das Kapital, he quoted on four different occasions from Luther's "An die Pfarrherrn, wider den Wucher zu predigen," of 1540, to support his own moral indignation at the exploitation of man by man.[16] In one instance Marx said: "In the old fashioned, yet constantly renewed form of Capitalism, usury, Luther clearly points to the desire for power as a strong element in the passion for profit."[17] Furthermore, Marx was in complete agreement with Luther whom he quoted as saying: "The heathen were able to come to the conclusion that a userer was a fourfold thief and a murderer on the basis of reason. We Christians, however, hold them in such honor that we virtually pray to them because of their money . . . . But whoever robs and steals his neighbor's food commits murder to the same extent as someone who squeezes him dry over a period of time. This is exactly what the userer does, meanwhile sitting safely at home in his chair, whereas he should rightfully be hanging from the gallows and be eaten by as many vultures as the guilders he stole . . . ."[18] Thus Luther takes on the guise of a critic of capitalism in Marx's Das Kapital.[19]

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[14] Zimmermann, as we noted in Chapter IV, approached Luther from the same general perspective: he judged Luther by the latter's action and then tried to prove this judgment correct by means of a judicious selection of the facts from Luther's writings. Engels did not really even need these writings.

[15] Marx, "Chronologische Auszüge," Zur deutschen Geschichte, I, 305-13.

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[16] M/E, Werke, XXIII, 149, 207, 328 and 619. In these instances Marx's moral indignation at the evils of capitalistic monetary policies finds expression in the words of Martin Luther whom he quotes with obvious approval. It is perhaps not amiss to point out the similarity in aims of Marx and Luther, yet their solution to the problem was radically different—a difference based fundamentally and ultimately on their different concepts of man. Luther's admonition "An die Pfarrherrn . . ." is found in: WA, LI, 325-424.

[17] Ibid., p. 619.

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[18] Ibid.

[19] It is interesting in this regard that Marx did not see the Roman Catholic Church as such a strong bastion of feudalism either. Writing in his "Grundrisse der Kritik der politischen Ökonomie," Zur deutschen Geschichte, he stated: "Dass die Päpste fast allen christkatholischen Ländern kirchliche Schatzungen auflegten, hat nicht wenig beigetragen zunächst zur Entwicklung des geamten Geldwesens im gewerbtätigen Europa und dann als Folge zur Entstehung von mancherlei Versuchen, das Kirchengut (gegen Zinsen) zu umgehn. Der Papst bediente sich der übrigen Gebühren. Dies die Hauptwucherer und Pfandleiher, unter pästlichem Schutz. Schon seit Mitte des 12. Jahrhunderts bekannt. Besonders aus Siena. 'Öffentliche usurarii.' 'Römisch-bischöfliche Geldhändler' nannten sie sich in England. Einige Bischöfe von Basel u.a. versetzten bischöflichen Ring, seidne Gewänder, das ganze Kirchengerät um ein Geringes bei Juden und zahlten Zinsen. Aber Bischöfe, Äbte, Pfaffen trieben auch selbst Wucher mit dem Kirchengerät, indem sie dasselbe gegen einen Anteil am Gewinn toskanischen Geldhändlern aus Florenz, Siena und andern Städten verpfändeten, etc.

". . . Es ist also alles aneigenbar durch alle, und es hängt vom Zufall ab, was das Individuum sich aneignen kann oder nicht, da es abhängt von dem Geld in seinem Besitz. Damit ist das Individuum an sich als Herr von allem gesetzt. Es gibt keine absoluten Werte, da dem Geld der Wert als solcher relativ. Es gibt nichts Unveräusserliches, da alles gegen Geld veräusserlich. Es gibt nichts Höheres, Heiliges etc., da alles durch Geld aneigenbar. Die 'res sacrae' und 'religiosae,' die 'in nulluis bonis,' sein können, 'nec aestimationem recipere, nec obliquari alienarique posse,' existieren nicht vor dem Geld—wie vor Gott alle gleich sind. Schön, wie die römische Kirche im Mittelalter selbst Hauptpropogandist des Geldes (ist)," pp. 169-70. Written 1857/58.

If Luther was a critic of capitalistic fiscal policies, how then could he also be a representative of the bourgeoisie? The apparent contradiction does not seem to have occurred either to Engels' or to Marx's mind, for even Marx could assert in another connection that Protestantism was the bourgeois form of the Christian ideology.[20] Since Luther had been the father of Protestantism, Marx would also have had to admit that Luther had been the representative of the bourgeoisie. As shall become evident in the course of this chapter, however, Marx's approval of Luther's "An die Pfarrherrn, wider den Wucher zu predigen," has aroused little attention from Marxist historians until very recently, and then only for very specific reasons as will be seen.

The argument that Lutheranism, after 1525, ceased to be a Volksbewegung and became a Fürstenreformation,[21] is a necessary logical conclusion to the observation that Luther turned his back on the peasants as well as the bourgeoisie during the Peasant War and went over to the side of the princes. In accordance with this view, Luther went through three phases, beginning as a man of the people, progressing to the representative of the bourgeoisie, and ending as a hireling of the princes. In the same way, Luther's teachings—the ideology of the bourgeois middle class—also went through three phases; in the first phase it was an undogmatic opposition toward feudal Catholicism; in the second phase it became the ideological expression of the bourgeoisie; and in the third phase it expressed the ideas of princely absolutism. Either Engels knew nothing about Luther's thought and could therefore place it into whatever category and class he pleased, or Luther was indeed an unscrupulous wretch who modified his teachings in important aspects in order to remain on the victorious side.[22] If the first is the case then Engels was not the man called to pass judgment on Luther; if, however, the second is the case, then Luther's teachings were in reality the expression of no class and rested on no capitalistic basis, for, according to Marxist theory, the ideology of a given class grows out of that class position and in turn is used to solidify it. Engels, however, accused Luther of passing through three different phases and giving, within the space of eight years, expression to the ideologies of three different classes.

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[20] "Für eine Gesellschaft von Warenproduzenten, deren allgemein gesellschaftliches Produktionsverhältnis darin beseteht, sich zu ihren Produkten als Waren, also als Werten zu verhalten, und in dieser sachlichen Form ihre Privatarbeiten aufeinander zu beziehn als gleiche menschliche Arbeit, ist das Christentum, mit seinem Kultus des abstrakten Menschen, namentlich in seiner bürgerlichen Entwicklung, den Protestantismus, Deismus usw., die entsprechende Religionsform." M/E, Werke, XXII, 93.

[21] Zimmermann had already asserted this. See above, p. 148.

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[22] It is this last aspect of Luther that is stressed by a writer in Die Neue Zeit, I (1883), 489-96, in an article entitled, "Zum Lutherjubiläum." The author signed his name only with L. I.

In 1856 Heinrich Leo wrote an essay on Thomas Müntzer[23] in which he attempted to free Luther and the Reformation from the charge of revolution. In the process, Luther appeared as a person who had been saved from embarking on the road to revolution because of radicals like Carlstadt and especially Müntzer,[24] although he had had sympathies with the knights surrounding Sickingen and Hutten and their plans for a secularization of Church property. In the course of the essay Luther became even more, however. Leo emphasized Luther's break with his youthful, more radical days and proceeded to make him into a loyal servant of the princes[25] who had hurried back from the Wartburg in order to stem the tide of revolution[26] and halt the radical innovations initiated in Wittenberg by Carlstadt.[27]

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[23] Heinrich Leo, Thomas Münzer (Berlin, 1856).

[24] ". . . Dass Luther, nachdem er ganz kurze Zeit einige Sympathie für dies Uebergreifen der Reformation auf das Gebiet der Reichsverfassung gezeigt und in diesem sympathetischen Zuge mit den Rheinischen Ritterkreis, an deren Spitze Sickingen auftrat, seine Schriften an den christlichen Adel Deutscher Nation und von der Babylonischen Gefangenschaft der Kirche verfasst hatte, sich doch noch rechtzeitig vor dem Gefangenwerden in diesen revolutionären Bestrebungen gehütet und von den Rheinischen Kreisen sich entschieden abgewendent hat, hat allerdings dann die lutherischen Gemeinden vor einer weiteren revolutionären Betheiligung bewahrt und ist ein herrliches Zeugnis von dem richtigen Tacte des grossen Mannes auch auf Gebieten, die seiner wissenschaftlichen Erkenntnis weniger klar vorlagen; aber eben deshalb kann man ohne Ungerechtigkeit den Vorwurf des revolutionären Charakters nur in Beziehung auf die speciell lutherische Reformation für unbegründet erklären, nicht in Beziehung auf die Reformationszeit überhaupt, und auch die lutherische Reformation hat sich erst allmälig ganz rein gemacht von revolutionären Beigaben, und ist nicht sofort nach dieser Seite in klaren Grundsätzen aufgetreten. Wie nun zuerst die rationalistischen und bilderstürmerischen Extravaganzen der um Sickingen sich zusammen schliessenden Reformatoren Luthern die anfängliche Lust, die damalige Bewegung auch auf das Reich auszudehnen, verdächtig gemacht haben, so hat die bodenlos revolutionäre Richtung Thomas Münzers und der Freunde desselben ihn vollends zur Klarheit gebracht über das, was seines Amtes sey. Ich habe mir als Gegenstand der heutigen Vorlesung das Leben dieses letzteren Mannes gewählt, der (allerdings wider Wissen und Willen) das Verdienst hat, unsere lutherische Reformation für immer vor dem Hineingerathen in revolutionäre Bahnen sicher gestellt zu haben." Ibid., p. 4.

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[25] ". . . denn nun sah er [Luther] überhaupt, wo alle solche Neigungen ihren Ausgang nehmen würden und hielt auch so lange er lebte seinen Kreis streng in der Treue gegen Kaiser und Reichsverfassung. Eine Erscheinung, wie der unglückselige Schmalcaldener Krieg, war erst nach Luthers Tode möglich . . . ." *Ibid*., p. 11.

[26] "Diese Gefahr bewog endlich Luther, sein Versteck auf der Wartburg zu verlassen—und ihr verdanken wir es auch, dass die deutsche Reformation nicht einen weiteren revolutionären Verlauf überhaupt nahm . . . ." *Ibid*., p. 10.

[27] ". . . Luther fand, als er nach Wittenberg zurückkehrte, alles in Unordnung—da konnte es ihm zwar nicht einfallen das, was er früher selbst aus allen Kräften bekämpft hatte, nämlich die Privatmesse, die er oft als Winkelmesse oder auch einfach als Messe bezeichnete, weshalb man sich gewöhnlich einbildet, er sey überhaupt gegen die Messe gewesen, wieder herzustellen, aber die Communicantenmesse, sogar in lateinischer Sprache und mit Elevation der Hostie, nur durch die Spendung auch des Kelches erweitert, und mit Deutschen Kirchenliedern daneben, stellte er wieder her und die Wittenberger konnten noch lange rühmen, dass wer ihrem Gottesdienste beiwohne, *fast keine Abweichung von dem in der ganzen Christenheit und seit uralten Zeiten stattfindenden wahrnehmen werde, als den Laien gereichten Kelch, der ja den Utraquisten in Böhmen vom Pabste selbst gestattet war* . . . [my italics]." *Ibid*., p. 11

It is of interest to note that although Leo directed his thrust against the Catholic interpretation of Luther and the Reformation as the sources of revolution,[28] Marx interpreted the essay, which he read only in part, as an attack on Engels' portrait of Müntzer and the Reformation.[29]

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[28] Leo stated quite explicitly: "Der von Katholiken so oft wiederholte Vorwurf, die Deutsche Reformation sey nicht blos ein revolutionärer Vorgang gewesen, sondern auch die Wurzeln aller späteren revolutionären Bewegungen, welche das Leben der Europäischen Völker erschüttert haben, ist eben so oft dadurch zurückgewiesen worden, dass diese Deutsche Reformation nur auf die ursprüngliche Aufgaben der Kirche zurückgegriffen und an diesem ursprünglichen Aufgaben das Leben gemessen, also überall keine sittlichen Grundlagen zerstört, sondern nur die vorhandenen von darüber gestürzten Schutte gereinigt, dass sie also in der That nur reformirt nicht revolutionirt habe . . . ." Ibid., p. 1.

[29] On the similarity between the Marxist picture of Luther and the Reformation with that of the 19th-century Catholic interpretation, Heinrich Bornkamm stated: ". . . Seine [Feuerbach's] marxistische Schüler nahmen sie [Feuerbach's interpretation] schon deshalb nicht auf, weil in ihrem Geschichtsbild Luther eine ganz andere Rolle spielte: die des Fürstenknechts und Verräters am Bauernproletariat. So haben ihn Friedrich Engels und Franz Mehring mit nicht geringerer Leidenschaft angeprangert, als es die gleichzeitige katholische Lutherdarstellung mit seinen kirchlichen und moralischen Wirkungen tat. Ja, sie trafen sich darin z.T. auch mit Janssen. Er hatte einerseits Luther für mitschuldig erklärt an dem Ausbruch der Revolution, die er als Religionskrieg bezeichnete, andererseits ebenso an der Unterdrückung des Bauernstandes durch die Fürsten, denen gegenüber er absoluten Gehorsam forderte . . . ." Heinrich Bornkamm, Luther im Spiegel der deutschen Geistesgeschichte (Heidelberg, 1955), p. 56.

> . . . Father Leo has given a lecture on Münzer before the king (partially reprinted in the "Neue Preussische Zeitung"). One has the feeling that it is directed specifically against your essay in the "Revue der Neuen Rheinischen Zeitung." Naturally, the Reformation has to be freed from the accusation of being the mother of revolutions. Münzer was a Spiritualist who said: "intelligo ut credam." Luther said: "credo ut intelligam." The "Spenersche"[30] has answered: Luther in later years regretted the miserable role he had played politically. You see that the ferment is breaking out even in the official circles.[31]

It is quite possible that the introduction to the essay was omitted in the Neue Preussische Zeitung, otherwise Marx would have realized that the essay had not been directed against Engels' reinterpretation. Marx's error is significant, however, for the Catholic interpretation of Luther and the Reformation as the source of revolution in 16th-century Germany fitted nicely into the Marxist scheme of the Reformation as an early form of the bourgeois revolution. It then also becomes apparent why Marxists like Hanna Köditz can rely so heavily on Janssen's History of the German People[32] despite the fact that Engels had referred to the former's interpretation as that ". . . 'narrow-minded' Catholic polemic. . ."[33] against the Protestant Luther-legend.[34]

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[30] This is very likely a reference to Leo.

[31] Marx to Engels, March 5, 1856. M/E, Werke, XXIX, 24-25.

[32] See Hanna Köditz, "Die gesellschaftlichen Ursachen des Scheiterns des Marburger Religionsgesprächs vom 1. bis 4. Oktober 1529." ZfG, 2 (1954), 1, 37-70.

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[33] Engels to Kautsky, February 1, 1892. E/K, Briefwechsel, p. 328.

[34] It was outside the scope of this study to enquire further into the effects of the 1848 revolution on Lutheran and Catholic interpretations of the Reformation; however, if Leo was typical of Lutheran interpreters, then it is no wonder that Engels should turn against them. On the other hand, it is also apparent that his notion of a change in the Luther before Carlstadt, Müntzer and the Anabaptists, and the Luther after should have been confirmed by precisely such interpretations as that of Leo. Wilhelm F. Bofinger, "Zur Rolle des Luthertums in der Geschichte des deutschen Ständeparlamentarismus," Heinz Liebing u. Klaus Scholder, hrsg., Geist und Geschichte der Reformation (Berlin, 1966), p. 396, seems to indicate that Leo may well have been quite typical of his time when he states: "Angesichts der Kluft, welche sich im 19. Jahrhundert zwischen der grosseuropäischen Gesellschaftsentwicklung und den eigentümlichen politischen Strukturen auf dem Boden des alten Reiches auftat, hatte diese Geschichtsschreibung versucht, jene Sonderexistenz mit dem Rekurs auf spezielle religiöse Traditionen zu sanktionieren, indem man das Bild von Thron und Altar zurückprojizierte in die Geschichte des 17. und 18. Jahrhunderts. Auch die Kirchengeschichte folgte diesem Muster und sah die deutsche Konfessionskirche im Lichte des absolutistischen Landesherrentums. Man überging dabei einen anderen Tatbestand, der für die Entwicklung moderner politischer Strukturen gerade ausschlaggebend war: die Verflechtung der deutschen Kirchen mit der Ständeorganisation der alten Gesellschaft . . . ."

However, Engels must not have been fully satisfied with his own delineation of Luther's life and thought, or convinced of its persuasiveness, for in 1892 he wrote Kautsky: "It came to me during these last days that a portrayal of Luther from his deeds and writings would be a very necessary piece of work . . . ."[35] Engels was not only interested in producing a convincing account of Luther's life from the Marxist point of view, he also wanted to combat the 'Protestant legend' on the one hand and the 'narrow-minded' Catholic polemic against this legend on the other hand.[36] He had no intention, however, of attempting to give an objective account of Luther's life and thought, for he wanted Kautsky to prove ". . . from our viewpoint, how much the Reformation was a bourgeois movement, and a very necessary ideological expression . . . ."[37] He even went on to tell Kautsky what to do: he was to demonstrate the parallel between the Luther before Carlstadt, the Anabaptists, the Peasant War and the Luther after on the one hand, with the bourgeoisie before 1848 and after 1848 on the other. This change in Luther was to be brought out very clearly. Here, concluded Engels, was an important task still to be taken in hand. Nor would it take overly much work! And Kautsky was the man for the job.[38]

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[35] Engels to Kautsky, February 1, 1892, E/K, Briefwechsel, p. 328.

[36] Ibid. Engels refers to Janssen's Geschichte des deutschen Volkes (Freiburg i.B., 1876), in particular.

[37] Ibid.

But even though, or precisely because, Kautsky proceeded from the frame of reference Engels had set him, and although he laid claim to having read all of Luther's writings pertaining to the Peasant War,[39] he could come to no deeper appreciation of Luther's thought than had Engels before him. Thus he asserted that Luther had not demonstrated any originality in his thinking, and had even been overshadowed by many of his contemporaries.[40] Events and people had forced Luther to break with the pope, not any initiative of his own. If Luther condemned the papacy in 1519, to which he had still clung in 1518, this was not due to any new or more profound insights into the nature of the papacy Luther had gained in the meantime, it was much rather the result of outward influences which had worked upon him.[41] Even Luther's courageous "Here I stand, I can do no other, so help me God!" was forced from his lips because Kautsky believed Luther had been cunning enough to know that he had burnt his bridges behind him; hence, since a recantation would not have won over his enemies and only alienated his supporters, Luther had no other choice but to stand firm. But Luther also knew that the princes and the knights would not leave him in the lurch if he remained firm.[42]

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[38] Ibid. ". . . und Du bist durch den 'Th. Morus' [Kautsky had written a short study, Thomas More und Seine Utopie, a few years previously] gerade dafuer praeparirt. Dazu hast Du ja in Stuckert die famoseste Bibliothek ueber Protestantismus die es gibt . . . ."

[39] Kautsky answered Engels' letter on February 19, 1892, with the following words: "Was Du ueber Luther schreibst, dafuer danke ich Dir sehr und will diese Anregung beherzigen. Ich habe ja s.Z., wie Du Dich vielleicht noch erinnerst . . . die Schriften Luthers u. Melanchthons, soweit sie den Bauernkrieg behandeln, durchgearbeitet . . . ." Ibid., p. 329.

[40] But Kautsky had only read Luther's writings which pertained to the Peasant War, so he was in a poor position to judge. Kautsky, Vorläufer, p. 14.

The only ability Kautsky was willing to ascribe to Luther was the ability of the agitator. Luther, although an academician, had understood the needs, feelings, and the thoughts of the common man and had known how to use his language as no one else. As a master of polemical debate, Luther had been able to convince commoner and noble alike. No one before him had been able to unite the classes in this manner against the pope; all his forerunners had been able to reach only one class at a time.[43]

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[41] Ibid., p. 17.

[42] Ibid., pp. 17-18. Kautsky's point of view becomes very obvious when he quotes Müntzer's comment on Luther's stand at Worms with full approval. "Über deinem Rühmen möchte einer wohl entschlaffen vor deiner unsinnigen Torheit, dass du zu Worms vor dem Reich gestanden bist. Dank hab' der deutsche Adel, dem du das Maul also wohl bestrichen hast und Honig gegeben; denn er wähnte nicht anders, du würdest mit deinem Predigen behaimische Geschenke geben, Klöster und Stifte, welche du jetzt den Fürsten verheissest. So du zu Worms hättest gewankt, wärest du eher erstochen vom Adel worden als losgegeben; weiss es doch ein jeder." "Hochverursachte Schutzrede," Brandt, Leben und Schriften, p. 200.

The rest of Kautsky's portrait of Luther differed very little from that of Engels', except that Kautsky placed the beginning of Luther's revolutionary period somewhat later than Zimmermann and Engels had. For Kautsky, this period first began in 1519 and came into full force in the 1520's with Luther's pamphlet to the Christian nobility of the German nation. Like Zimmermann and Engels, he quoted Luther's letter against Prierias with its revolutionary passage, but he must at least have dated it correctly. Like the others, however, he also forgot to add that the passage had been in Latin.[44]

Kautsky was led to a small digression, however, which weakened his argumentation for the picture of a class-conscious Luther. In order to show the respectable Lutheran society of his day that the agitation of the Social Democrats was not to be despised, Kautsky quoted long passages in which Luther railed at the princes, little thinking what this did to the Marxist picture of Luther the princely hireling.[45] But immediately he had quoted these passages, Kautsky tried to soften their impact by saying that Luther had made sure he did not follow these words with any action against the princes![46]

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[43] Kautsky, Vorläufer, p. 18.

[44] Ibid., pp. 20-21.

With the outbreak of the Peasant War, however, the class lines began to be drawn and Luther, like Cato, hastily retreated to the victorious side.[47] But Kautsky could not agree with Engels that Luther's action had automatically signified the defeat first of the knights' and then of the peasants' cause. No individual could have such an influence on the weal or woe of any class. Luther had not brought victory to the princes in that he had gone over to their side, he only appeared a victor as a result of his transfer to the victorious cause.[48]

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[45] Ibid., p. 21. Kautsky gave the following reason for quoting the passages in which Luther had criticized the princes: "Wenn wir bei der Wiedergabe dieser Stellen etwas ausführlich geworden sind, so geschah es nicht nur zur Charakterisierung Luthers. Jetzt, wo 'gutgesinnte' Leute, darunter Stützen der lutherischen Kirchen, sich so lebhaft über die 'masslose Heftigkeit und Roheit' der sozialdemokratischen Agitation entrüstet, scheint es uns angezeigt, darauf hinzuweisen, welche Sprache der Mann ungestraft führte, dessen Lehre zu einer der Stützen der heutigen Gesellschaft geworden ist."

[46] Ibid., p. 22.

[47] Kautsky does not say how Luther knew which side would be victorious!

[48] Ibid., p. 22.

E. Belfort Bax, writing his history of the Peasant War four years after Kautsky, in 1899, portrayed Luther in much the same way Zimmermann had, for since he was no dogmatic Marxist follower,[49] the class approach to Luther was lacking.[50] Nor did Franz Mehring come to any startlingly new conclusions regarding Luther's role in the Reformation and the Peasant War from his Marxist perspective,[51] perhaps because he relied nearly exclusively upon Kautsky for his sources.[52]

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[49] E. Belfort Bax, The Peasant War in Germany 1525-1526 (London, 1899).

[50] In a letter to Sorge of December 7, 1889, Engels stated: "Here in England one can see that it is impossible simply to drill a theory in an abstract dogmatic way into a great nation, even if one has the best theories, developed out of their own conditions of life, and even if the tutors are relatively better than the SLP [Socialist Labour Party]. The movement has now got going at last and I believe for good. But it is not directly Socialist, and those English who have understood our theory best remain outside it; Hyndman because he is incurably jealous and intriguing, Bax because he is only a bookworm . . . ." Correspondence, p. 460.

[51] Franz Mehring, Zur deutschen Geschichte (Berlin, 1946), pp. 42-50.

It was not until after World War II that the Marxists came back to the problem of Luther and the Peasant War; now, however, new dimensions were added. Those who produced 'Marxist' histories of the Reformation before this time[53] had been in direct contact with Engels,

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[52] A comparison of Mehring's passages with those of Kautsky makes one very suspicious. See, for example, the following passages:

Kautsky:	Mehring:
Wenn er in den Mittelpunkt der Bewegung geriet, so verdankte er dies nicht überlegener Einsicht nicht originellem und kühnem Denken. Darin waren ihm gar manche swiner Zeitgenossen weit voraus . . . (14). . . . Luther trat in den Kreis dieser Humanisten während seiner Erfurter Studienjahre ein (1501). Aber es scheint, dass mehr ihr fröhliches Leben als ihr Geist ihm anzog; wenigstens war von diesem nicht viel mehr zu merken, als sich nach der Fröhlichkei der Katzenjammer einstellte, und Martin den Entschluss fasste, ins Kloster zu gehen (1505)	. . . Er war kein geistig überlegener Kopf; an kühnem und originellem Denken wurde er von manchem Zeitgenossen übertroffen. Als Student in Erfurt hatte er sich dem humanistischen Kreise angeschlossen, der sich an dieser Universität gebildet hatte, allein mit seiner humanistischen Bildung war es nicht weit her. Eher scheint ihm das lustige Leben der Humanisten angezogen zu haben; darauf deutet der moralische Katzenjammer hin, der ihn im Jahre 1505 in das Erfurter Augustinerkloster und zu den schwersten Bussübungen trieb . . . (42).

[53] Russian interest in the German Reformation, aside from a few pre-World War II studies, also stems from the post-war period, Smirin's book on Thomas Müntzer (1947) being one of the first.

but from numerous letters between the various personalities involved, it is clear that Engels learnt as much from others as others learnt from him.[54] This free exchange of opinion led to certain changes in interpretation, but with the beginning of Russian and East German Marxist historiography of the Reformation definite guidelines began to be laid down by party leaders, especially in East Germany, which were then discussed at historical congresses and implemented by writers and teachers alike.[55] In an address to an assembly of archivists, Leo Stern, one of the foremost East German historians involved in the rewriting of German history, laid down the guidelines for the new interpretation. Stern demanded that the East German historians shake off the disastrous ballast of traditional German historicism and pick up, once again, the strands of 'progressive' historical writing which the Renaissance Humanists had begun and which had found its greatest exponents in Marx and Engels.[56] At the same time, the reactionary ideological rubble of 19th-century idealistic philosophy as well as the Romantic-Catholic Restoration ideology must be swept aside. In accordance with the 'progressive' nature of the historian's task, the German revolutionary tradition, begun in the Middle Ages, which found its finest hour in the great Peasant War of 1525, was to be glorified. Furthermore, the East German historian was to emphasize Germany's great cultural heritage—the ideas of progress, democracy, freedom, and humanism—and bring this heritage into organic connection with the progressive aims of the German Democratic Republic. He was to glorify the examples of courage, heroism, patriotism, and dedication to the cause of the German people in German history and he was to fight against the nihilistic tendencies aiming at the dissolution of the German nation which had produced such great heroes as Walthers von der Vogelweide, Hans Sachs, Albrecht Dürer, Thomas Müntzer, Martin Luther [my italics], and so on. Thus it was the duty of the teachers of history to free the schools and universities of the German Democratic Republic of all reactionary ballast and mobilize

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[54] See especially Engels' letter to Kautsky regarding the latter's Vorläufer des Neueren Sozialismus, of May 25, 1895, which will be cited in another context later on. E/K, Briefwechsel, pp. 433-35.

[55] See, for example, the discussion by Jürgen von Hehn, "Die Sowjetisierung des Geschichtbildes in Mitteldeutschland," Europa Archiv, 9 (1954), pp. 2929-38 and 2973-77.

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[56] Thus the Marxists see themselves as the last in the great progressive tradition—a tradition which points directly to Marx and Engels from its earliest beginnings.

Germany's past history in the fight for peace, democracy, progress, and a united Germany. By doing this, the historian would fill the citizens of the German Democratic Republic with a sanctus amor patriae which would sweep aside their inferiority complex and the idea that Germany's history had been ". . . eine Misere in Permanenz . . ."[57] and, instead, awaken in them a proud self-consciousness.[58]

This meant, of course, that Luther was to become a German national hero once again, yet exactly how this was to be achieved in the face of Engels' and Kautsky's condemnation was not at first clear. It was not long, however, before the first studies appeared in which the way was shown. Already in the next year two popular studies of Luther saw the light of day in East Germany[59] and a third appeared which devoted a portion to Luther.[60]

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[57] Engels, however, had called Germany's history exactly this. In a letter to Mehring of September 28, 1892, he had written: ". . . In studying German history—the story of a continuous state of wretchedness—I have always found that only a comparison with the corresponding French periods produces a correct idea of proportions . . . ." Correspondence, p. 543.

[58] Given in an appendix to Hehn's article, Europa Archiv, pp. 6936-37.

Kammitzer, in his Vorgeschichte des Bauernkrieges, once again dealt with Luther only to the extent that the latter had become involved in the Peasant War, but he added no new insights to the Marxist interpretation.[61] Not only did Kammitzer not add any new insights, however, he did not even bring an elementary knowledge of basic Christian concepts to his subject. Thus he could say: "People believed that the world was coming to an end as well as that Christ would return—these two ideas were held at the same time and often even by the same people . . . ."[62] Yet, in spite of this lack of basic knowledge, Kamnitzer could assert that Luther had given a mighty weapon to the people in his German translation of the Bible merely because Engels had said so. But if the Bible had been the weapon, what had happened to the economic causes? Kamnitzer conveniently forgot about these to the extent that he could make Luther responsible for the future course of German history.[63] All in all, Kamnitzer's study, with its heavy reliance upon Engels and his other Marxist forerunners, was obviously a somewhat hurried and not very consistent answer to the call Ulbright and Stern had issued for Marxist histories of Germany.

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[59] Karl Kleinschmidt, Martin Luther (Berlin, 1953), and Leo Stern, Martin Luther und Philipp Melanchthon (Berlin, 1953).

[60] Heinz Kammitzer, Zur Vorgeschichte des deutschen Bauernkrieges (Berlin, 1953).

[61] Even his Marxist reviewer had to state: "Kammitzer hat in seiner vorliegenden Schrift darauf verzichtet, diese und andere noch grundsätzlich zu klärenden Fragen zu erörtern . . . Das sich bei einer solchen Beschränkrung notwendig weithin nur eine zusammenfassende Wiederholung bereits vorliegender Ergebnisse marxistischer Forschung ergeben, dass eine Antwort auf die oben umrissenen Fragen dabei nicht erstrebt werden konnte, war so nicht zu vermeiden . . . ." R. Müller, ZfG, 2 (1954), 4, 134.

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[62] Vorgeschichte, p. 89. He was again justifiably criticized by his Marxist reviewer: ". . . Die Unterschätzung der Ideologiegeschichte wirkt sich hier u.a. in Unkenntnis auch einfachster dogmengeschichtlicher Zusammenhänge aus. Wie konnte sonst als Beweis für die 'hektische Lebensstimmung der Zeit' angeführt werden: 'Man glaubte an das Ende der Welt ebenso wie an die Wiederkehr Christi—oft zu gleicher Zeit und oft die gleichen Menschen,' da doch Parousie und Weltende wie im Neuen Testament so in der gesamten christlichen Literatur zussammenfallen . . . ." ZfG, 2 (1954), 4, 134.

[63] ". . . Ebenso unbestritten ist seine verhängnisvolle Verantwortung für den unmittelbaren Ausgang der Auseinandersetzungen und den weiteren Verlauf der deutschen Geschichte . . . Wenn die deutsche Reformation, der Grosse Bauernkrieg eingeschlossen, mit dem Siege über die Feudalherren geendet hätte, so wäre die deutsche Geschichte anders, glücklicher verlaufen . . . Damals war Dr. Luther wie ein Zünglein an der Waage . . . ." Vorgeschichte, p. 90. Once again Rosemarie Müller took him to task, this time for overemphasizing Luther's personal role in the outcome of the Peasant War! ZfG, 2 (1954), 4, 134.

B. Luther's Thought

Zimmermann, and like him, Engels, had come to the conclusion that Luther had begun his career as a revolutionary and had ended it as a reactionary without having studied very much, if anything, of Luther's thought. If these actions were forced upon Luther by Germany's political situation and his class position, then, from the Marxist point of view, Luther's thoughts should reflect his actions. But, until 1953, no one had attempted an analysis of Luther's thought from the Marxist point of view.

With Kleinschmidt's book on Martin Luther, which also appeared in 1953 and was obviously an attempt to popularize the Marxist interpretation of the Reformation in East Germany, a first attempt was made to relate Luther's ideas to the role the Marxists had assigned him in the Peasant War. Kleinschmidt attempted to portray Luther as a man who had worked himself into a state of acute mental anguish because he had attempted to identify with a Roman Catholic ideology the new capitalistic mode of production had made anachronistic. Since the Catholic ideology no longer reflected the material base, a new ideology had become necessary. Luther's attempt to identify with a superseded ideology had only led to frustration and failure, however, for he had not recognized the true nature of the struggle going on within his soul.[64]

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[64] Kleinschmidt, Luther, pp. 1-31. This attempt is summed up in the following passage: "Wir erkennen in solchen Fragen die inneren Nöte wieder, in denen sich wiederspruchsvolle Beziehungen zum Sein und Bewusstsein seiner Zeit widerspiegelte. Er hatte Angst vor der Gottheit, die zu lieben er sich zu zwingen bemüht. Es drängt ihn mit unwiderstehlicher Gewalt aus einer Gedankenwelt hinaus, in die er mit allen Mitteln des Lernens und der Selbstkasteiung einzudringen versucht, ohne eine Ahnung davon, dass sich in seinen Gewissenskämpfen die Zeit mit ihren Voraussetzungen und Möglichkeiten der Epoche sich seine Seele zum Schlachtfeld auserkoren hatten. Blind, ohne Ahnung und Vorstellung vom Charakter dieser Spannungen und den sie erzeugenden wirtschaftlichen und gesellschaftlichen Änderungen, wurde er in ihre tiefste Hölle gestossen und musste sehen, wie er wieder herauskam," pp. 31-32. Kleinschmidt then proceeds to make this historical observation 'meaningful' to the situation in East Germany in the following words: "Wieviele junge Christen versuchen auch heute auf ähnlichem Wege den peinigenden Widerspruch zwischen Sein und Bewusstsein zu lösen, das heisst auf dem Wege einer immer strengeren Bindung an Lehre und Zucht jener Kirchlichkeit, die längst zum 'Deckel der Bosheit einer zum Tode verurteilten alten Ordnung geworden ist?" Kleinschmidt does not ask the right question, however; he should have asked why Catholicism, the ideology of feudalism, could continue to flourish although its material base had long since vanished, or why the Evangelical Church could flourish in Communist East Germany.

Through his study of the Bible Luther had discovered that the 'righteousness of God,' as given in the Bible, did not condemn man because of his unrighteousness and in turn demand righteous acts from him, rather it meant that God imputed His righteousness to man whereby man was saved. With this 'theory' Luther had not only supplanted the Catholic concept of God with another, he had also put the axe to the root of an ideology which had given a religious sanction to the feudal system. Thus the transition from the feudalism of the Middle Ages to the period of royal and princely absolutism had been ideologically prepared. From this new position, Luther could then change his mental anguish into a revolutionary criticism of the Church.[65]

But others had directed criticism against the Church before, why then should Luther's criticism have had so much greater effectiveness? Luther's criticism, answered Kleinschmidt, had struck at the very heart of the Church while that of other critics, even that of the Humanists, had touched only isolated aspects of the teaching and church practice. This was the major reason why Luther's criticism had led to a real Volksbewegung, while that of his predecessors had led only to sectarian responses. But this central criticism of the Catholic Church had remained on paper only for the time being because Luther had had no intention of making it public.[66]

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[65] Ibid., p. 43. And Engels had believed Luther's heresy had not gone beyond former bourgeois heresies!

Not even in his Ninety-five Theses had Luther given expression to his new theory, yet, despite this, the reaction of the masses had been immediate, for they stopped buying indulgences and rallied to the support of Luther. Thus the Volksbewegung was underway before Luther had expounded his new theory of grace which, according to Kleinschmidt, had made it possible for the former's movement to become a Volksbewegung in the first place! Nor does Kleinschmidt come back to the problem again, being happy to be well rid of it.

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[66] "Seine Kritik bleibt jedoch nicht an einzelnen Verfallserscheinungen hängen, sondern stösst zur Verneinung der Grundkonzeption der römischen Kirche vor.

"Das ist einer der wesentlichen Gründe dafür, warum seine Kritik an der Kirche, die in Einzelheiten oft milder war als etwa die ihrer humanistischen Kritiker, eine grosse Volksbewegung auszulösen vermochte, während es seine Vorläufer allenfalls zur Bildung von Sekten und Konventiklen gebracht hatten.

"Aber diese Kritik blieb vorläufig noch auf dem Papier, so ernst es ihm auch darum war. Er schrieb sie wohl nieder, verwahrte jedoch die Niederschrift in seinem Schreibtisch . . . ." Ibid., p. 45.

He had not forgotten, however, that Ulbricht and Stern had set him the task of making a national hero of Luther. In order to do this, Kleinschmidt emphasized Luther's heroic first period; yet he had to contend with the reactionary second period as well which, in the eyes of the Marxist historians, had always overshadowed the first period. Kleinschmidt tried to lessen this emphasis by concluding:

> But Luther is not dead. Only that Luther is dead who turned from his early position, not the Luther of the Theses, of the Address to the German Nobility, of the Babylonian Captivity, who wanted to unite his beloved Germans in the struggle against their enemies. And alive as ever is the Luther who gave us the bond of unity which no power on earth can tear asunder: the unity of our language. This language is born out of Luther's love for his beloved Germans and has become so great and powerful that no 'recantation,' not even that of its father can stop its progress in transforming its word into flesh and blood in a united, independent Germany in which everyone who speaks the German language is a lord and master.[67]

Thus Kleinschmidt attempted to salvage some pieces of the Luther wrecked on the Marxist rock of offence, the Peasant War.[68]

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[67] Ibid., p. 50. The Marxists, however, did not have to look far for these noble characteristics of Luther; they had already been emphasized by Engels, but not to this degree. Engels spoke of Luther in the following terms: ". . . Luther not only cleaned the Augean stable of the Church but also that of the German language; he created modern German prose and composed the text and melody of that triumphal hymn which became the Marseillaise of the sixteenth century . . . ." Introduction (1892) to "Socialism: Utopian and Scientific," On Religion, p. 154.

[68] In his description of Luther's role in the Peasant War Kleinschmidt relied exclusively on the Marxist interpretation of his Marxist predecessors.

Leo Stern, who had called the East German historians to arms, himself showed the way in the same year with a brief study on the early years of the Reformation. It was more ambitious than Kleinschmidt's for it attempted to place into Marxist perspective the role of Humanism and the Reformation in 16th-century Germany. Stern believed that Humanism and Reformation thought were both intellectual traditions which had a long history and were the ideological expression of a revolution in the socio-economic realm.[69] In this way he tried to diminish Luther's role in the genesis of Reformation thought.[70] But Stern was also aware that the content of Humanism and Reformation had not been the same, despite the fact that he asserted both were bourgeois ideologies. These differences he explained by pointing to the contradictions in the economic realm inherent in a period of economic transition and stating that, as a result, the ideological reflection had to be contradictory as well.[71] Yet, in spite of these contradictory economic and ideological conditions, Luther had been able to unite all of Germany against Rome which was plundering the German nation. Stern saw the reason for this in a quotation from Engels, not in any factual evidence.[72]

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[69] Stern, Luther und Melanchthon, pp. 15-16.

[70] This stands in direct contradiction to Kleinschmidt who had emphasized Luther's discovery of the new bourgeois ideology but then conveniently forgot about it when it failed to explain the Volksbewegung which it was supposed to have created.

Stern was further concerned to demonstrate that Luther's religious discovery had been eminently political in its effects.[73] He was able to emphasize this aspect of Luther's thought since he had already proven that ideology was the outgrowth of socio-economic conditions. By proclaiming justification by faith alone, Luther had made superfluous all the good works and other obligations laid on the Christians by the Roman Catholic Church, and had made possible the realization of a 'cheap' bourgeois church.[74]

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[71] "Daher [period of economic transition] trug in dieser geschichtlichen Übergangsepoche auch der ideologische Protest der aufkommenden Bourgeoisie gegen Feudalismus und Kirche noch einen durchaus widerspruchsvollen Charakter . . . ." Ibid., p. 17. As a general theory this may seem to have some merit, but upon closer inspection one finds grave weaknesses. In the first place, it fails to explain from the evidence; secondly, the fact that there were feudal economic practices side by side with capitalistic ones does not explain why the bourgeois ideology should be contradictory; it only points to the fact that there is a feudal ideology in conflict with a bourgeois one.

[72] "Der Kampf gegen Rom, das Deutschland ausplünderte und in Spaltung und Knechtschaft erhielt, war das Anliegen der ganzen deutschen Nation geworden, ohne Untershied der Klasse und des Standes. Die einzigartige Dialektik der Verhältnisse in Deutschland zu Beginn des 16. Jahrhunderts brachte es sogar mit sich, dass der Adel im Kampf um die Nationale Freiheit als der 'nationalste Stand' ausgesprochen werden konnte. Bei Friedrich Engels heisst es in diesem Zusammenhang. . . ." Ibid., p. 61. The dependence of Kammitzer, Kleinschmidt, and Stern upon Engels is especially striking. It is much greater than those who were closely associated with him.

[73] "'Der Mensch wird gerechtfertigt durch den Glauben' bedeutete in dieser Situation nicht nur die Proklamierung eines religiös-dogmatischen Unterschieds gegen das katholische Lehrsystem . . . sondern ein politisches Programm . . . ." Ibid., p. 62.

During this first phase at least the younger Humanists had made common cause with Luther as had everyone else. Rather than espouse Luther's cause, however, these younger Humanists had used Luther's religious attack to achieve their political goal.[75] After Luther's betrayal of Hutten's cause, Humanism and the Reformation had begun to drift apart; Erasmus and Reuchlin had already withdrawn from the Reformation and these were now followed by Hutten.[76]

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[74] Ibid., p. 63. This, of course, had already been pointed out by Engels.

[75] ". . . hatte er [Luther] in religiös-dogmatischer Gestalt vor allem die politische Macht der römischen Hierarchie getroffen. Das war es, was Luther in den Jahren 1517 bis 1521 die Weggemeinschaft und die leidenschaftliche Propaganda seiner Lehre durch die Junghumanisten eingetragen hatte, die ihrerseits ihre säkularen politischen Ziele mit Luthers religiöser Flagge deckten . . . ." Ibid., p. 63.

[76] "Als auch noch in den Stürmen der unter religiösen Parolen ausgetragenen Klasenkämpfe, in denen die Bibel auf beiden Seiten die Rolle der letzten Autorität spielte, die Universitäten und Schulen beinahe eingingen, als die theologischen Streitfragen infolge der nationalen und sozialen Beimengung die aufgewühlten Volksmassen ungleich tiefer erfassten als die von den Humanisten gepflegte Poesie, Rhetorik und die schönen Wissenschaften—da war nicht nur das Bündnis zwischen Humanismus und Reformation, sondern der Humanismus selbst an der Reformation zugrundegegangen." Ibid., p. 73.

Having arrived at 1521, Stern could turn his undivided attention to the favorite Marxist topic: Luther's reactionary stand during the Peasant War. The old clichés, the numerous quotations from Engels, and, of course, Luther's dastardly attack on the peasants in the twelfth hour of the Peasant War were all reiterated in correct Marxist fashion.

The most sophisticated attempt on the part of a Marxist to fit Luther's thought into the outline set by Engels for Kautsky—to portray the difference between the Luther before Carlstadt, the Anabaptists, and the Peasant War, and the Luther after—has come from the pen of Rosemarie Müller-Streisand,[77] the Marxist critic of Kamnitzer's Vorgeschichte des Bauernkrieges.[78] Her avowed purpose was twofold: she intended to view Luther's intellectual development from the materialistic point of view[79] and to attempt a periodization of Luther's thought.[80] In order to do this she did not find it necessary to read all of Luther's writings, for she made use only of his Table Talk and polemical works.[81]

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[77] Rosemarie Müller-Streisand, Luthers Weg von der Reformation zur Restauration (Halle/S., 1964).

[78] In her criticism of Kamnitzer's book she complained that no one had as yet attempted a study of Reformation theology from the Marxist point of view. This, she went on, was a very necessary undertaking. ZfG, 2 (1954), 4, 134.

The pattern into which Müller-Streisand's periodization was to fit had already been established by Zimmermann and Engels. It consisted of two poles: the early revolutionary, and the more mature reactionary Luther. That her results should fit into the scheme is therefore not too surprising.[82] She began by trying to determine what *das Refomratorische* in Luther's theology was, but stated that the change in Luther's thought could best be seen in his *Kirchenkritik*.[83] Proceeding from two different testimonies of Luther, an early and a late one,[84] she asked the question whether or not ". . . the mature Luther had given up basic aspects of his Reformation thought . . . ."[85] She came to the conclusion that Luther had indeed retreated from his early position and had manifested a marked tendency to return to a more Catholic theological position.[86]

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[79] ". . . Während die Kirchengeschichtsschreibung immer stärker darauf tendiert, zur rein geistesgeschichtlich orientierten abstrakten Dogmengeschichtsschreibung zu werden, für die die äusseren Fakten im Grunde eine quantité négligeable sind, hat die Profangeschichtsschreibung gerade in ihren fortschrittlichsten Vertretern in ihren Bemühungen um das Verständnis der Geschichte von deren materieller Basis her bisher die Ergebnisse der Ideologiegeschichte meist noch nicht umfassend genug berücksichtigt." Müller-Streisand, Luthers Weg, pp. 5-6.

[80] Ibid., p. 71.

[81] ". . . Als Quellen wurden hier fast ausschliesslich die Tischreden Luthers und seine Kampfschriften gegen spätere Gegner herangezogen . . . ." Ibid.

[82] ". . . und es erwies sich, dass die ursprüngliche Arbeitshypothese, dass sich Luthers Theologie am klarsten von seiner kirchlichen Existenz her periodisieren lassen müsste, tatsächlich nicht nur für die Periodisierung als solche ein günstiger Ausgangspunkt war . . . ." Ibid. However, in order to show this contrast she had had to, ". . . was beiden Perioden gemeinsam ist, im Interesse einer möglichst klaren und scharfen Fragestellung zurückzustellen . . . ." Ibid.

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[83] *Ibid*.

[84] "Auf welchen Zeitpunkt ist nun Luthers eigener Sicht seine reformatorische Neuentdeckung zu datieren? Darüber liegen von zwei verschiedenen Zeitpunkten zwei verschiedene Aussagen vor: der Widmungsbrief der 'Resolutiones disputationes de indulgentiarum virtute' vom 30. Mai 1518 an Staupitz und die Vorrede zum ersten Band der Gesamtausgabe seiner lateinischen Schriften von 1545." *Ibid*., p. 20.

[85] *Ibid*., p. 14.

[86] "Erst wenn diese Zusammenhänge deutlich sind, kann man zu einem sachlichen Verständnis derjenigen Auseinandersetzungen in der Reformationszeit kommen, in der noch einmal an entscheidender Stelle ein Protest gegen die grundsätzlich rekatholisierende Tendenz der reformatorisch wirksam gewordene Theologie laut geworden ist und die darum auch Luther zu aufschlussreicher Akzentuierung provozierte, zu einem Verständnis der antinomistischen Streitigkeiten . . . ." *Ibid*., p. 78.

Müller-Streisand found the reasons for this change in Luther in the latter's discussion with Agricola of 1538. Quoting Luther, she stated:

> Luther is prepared to admit to Agricola that the latter's appeal to his early writings is justified. It is very enlightening, therefore, to note the reason Luther gives for retreating from his early position: he explains that the situation has changed fundamentally. In the beginning one had had to console the frightened, anxious, and sorely tried consciences under Roman control; hence it had been necessary to proclaim the new Evangel and not the Law in order to lead people as quickly as possible out of their present hell. Now, however, people were too evil and too secure, they had become Epicureans and feared neither God nor man. The Antinomians overlooked how totally depraved contemporary society was and only made the too secure more secure. Therefore only those who were of a broken spirit should hear the Evangelical proclamation of repentance and faith; the Antinomians, however, wanted to preach sermons which belonged into the period of the contrite in a time when everyone felt secure . . . .[87]

Having established the fact that Luther had retreated from his early position, Müller-Streisand then proceeded to seek the background and the causes for this retreat.[88] Here she had to return to the old thesis of Engels so dear to all Marxist hearts that the economic conditions created by a nascent capitalism had already begun to crack the ideological unity wrought by the Catholic Church.[89] These new economic conditions, which, in the final analysis, had created the social tensions and the resulting social upheaval, had also determined Luther's retreat to a more conservative theology: Luther's conservative reaction to the radical social demands of his time was therefore reflected in his return to a more Catholic theology.[90] Thus Müller-Streisand had not only proven Engels' contention that Luther had shifted his position from that of a radical to that of a conservative, but she had also shown how Luther's reaction to the

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[87] *Ibid*., pp. 78-79.

[88] It is significant that Müller-Streisand, like all other Marxists dealing with the intellectual history of a period, can find no real integral connection between Luther's thought and material conditions. She can only bring up the old theories and old clichés without tracing any specific connection.

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[89] *Ibid.*, pp. 92-94. In an interesting footnote to the problem of the materialistic motivation of Luther's thought, Müller-Streisand compared Marxist and Catholic interpretations. "Für den folgenden Teil vgl. durchgehend Friedrich *Engels*, Der deutsche Bauernkrieg (Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin zur deutschen Geschichte Bd. 1, Bln. 1953). Wie unabgeschlossen die Diskussion der ideologiegeschichtlichen Bewertung in dem von Engels gespannten Rahmen ist, zeigen so unterschiedliche Arbeiten wie die von Leo *Stern*, Martin Luther und Philipp Melanchthon—ihre ideologische Herkunft und geschichtliche Leistung. Eine Studie der materiellen und geistigen Triebkräfte und Auswirkungen der Reformation, Bln, 1953, und die gediegene Analyse von M.M. *Smirin*, Die Volksreformation des Thomas Münzer und der grosse Bauernkrieg. Bln. 1952. Von bürgerlicher Seite sind insbesondere katholische Geschichtsschreiber den historischen Bedingungen der Reformation mit Erfolg nachgegangen; das Interesse, dem protestantischen Gegner materialistische Motive nachzuweisen, führt hier teilweise zu erstaunlichen historischen Erkenntnissen, ist aber natürlich nicht durch die Anerkenntnis einer allgemeinen dialektisch-materialistischen Gesetzlichkeit der Geschichte bestimmt. Vgl. u.a. Johannes *Janssen*, Geschichte des deutschen Volkes seit dem Ausgang des Mittelalters. Freiburg 1807, (sic) Heinrich *Denifle* Alb. M. *Weiss*, Luther und Luthertum. 2. Bd. Mainz 1909, J. *Lortz* a.a. O. Allerdings ist neuerdings bei Johannes *Hessen*—Luther in katholischer Sicht, Bonn 1947—hereits kritisch auf die Verwandtschaft dieser Darstellungen zum materialistischen Geschichtsbild hingewiesen worden: offenbar wird heute eine Distanzierung von diesem für notwendiger erachtet als die konfessionelle Polemik. Wiederum im Dienst der Aufhebung dieser Polemik versucht Karl August *Meissinger*, Luther, die deutsche Tragödie 1512, München 1953, von protestantischer Seite her, katholischer Sicht entgegenkommend, mit explizit konziliarischem Interesse eine Darstellung der historischen Bedingungen der Reformation zu geben, die weithin auf die materiellen Voraussetzungen eingeht." *Ibid.*, p. 178, note 633. With the growing influence of ecumenicity manifested in Luther research, the Marxists may well feel that they are losing their one ally in the West. It is from this viewpoint that Steinmetz's complaint comes significant. "Bemerkenswert ist in

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diesem Zusammenhang ein Vorgang, der eigentlich bereits nach der Grossen Sozialistischen Oktoberrevolution einsetzte, aber erst nach 1945 eine volle Bedeutung erhielt: Ich meine die Eliminierung der alten konfessionallen Gegensätze, die sich ja immer wieder gerade bei der Behandlung und Darstellung der Reformationszeit neu entzündet hatten, in der heutigen westdeutschen Reformationshistoriographie. J. Lortz ist dafür im katholischen Lager kennzeichnend mit seinem Höchstmass von Annäherung an das protestantische Bild von Luther und der Reformation . . . ." "Probleme der frühbürgerlichen Revolution," Frühbürgerliche Revolution, pp. 34-35.

[90] ". . . dass die oben aufgewiesenen Wandlungen seiner Theologie in irgendeinem Zusammenhang mit dem Erfolg dieser Theologie stehen, dass sie irgendwie mit der bedenklichen Tatsache zusammenhängen, dass die ekklesiologische Aporie, in der Luther sich befunden hatte, primär nicht von innen, sondern von aussen gelöst wurde, dass die historische, gesellschaftliche Tatsache einer Massenbewegung ihn in der theologischen Entscheidung seines Lebens bestimmt hatte." Müller-Streisand, Luthers Weg, p. 98.

social upheaval of his own day had determined his theological development. And, of course, the economic conflicts with their resulting class conflicts had brought on the social upheaval.

In his volume in the series Lehrbücher der deutschen Geschichte,[91] Steinmetz summarized the results of Marxist Luther research. With regard to Luther's religious crisis, he accepted the argument of Kleinschmidt[92] that the nascent capitalistic mode of production had made the feudal Catholic ideology anachronistic and therefore Luther's attempt to identify with it had led necessarily to his mental anguish.[93] The result of Luther's mental agonizing had been his discovery that God justified man by imputing His righteousness to him and not by demanding righteous acts from him. With this new approach to salvation, saints, a priestly hierarchy which could deny one salvation by withholding the sacraments, were made superfluous. Thus, continued Steinmetz, Luther's intellectual achievement appeared as the objective expression of the economic and political struggle of the bourgeoisie and the masses against the Roman Catholic Church. This new theology made the old church superfluous and aimed at a 'cheap' bourgeois church.[94]

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[91] Max Steinmetz, Deutschland 1476-1648 (Berlin, 1965).

[92] See above, pp. 332-34.

[93] ". . . Für diesen plötzlichen Entschluss [Luther's entry into the monastery] hat Luther im Alter unterschiedliche Erklärungen abgegeben. Man wird nicht fehlgehen, wenn man diesen schwerwiegenden Schritt als Austruck der allgemeinen gesellschaftlichen Krise ansieht, die auch vor den psychischen Bereichen nicht halt machte und die Lebenssicherheit der menschen empfindlich zu stören vermochte. Der Zusammenprall des Alten und des aufkeimenden Neuen rief vielfach [my italics] verdeckte oder gar offene Zweifel an altehrwürdige Traditionen hervor, die sich bei Luther zu Gewissensqualen und zur Frage nach der Heilsgewischeit verdichteten . . . ." Steinmetz, Deutschland, p. 88. One is inclined to ask why only vielfach? If this is a scientific law, then why not always, and in particular why not in the case of Duke George of Saxony and his counterpart Frederick the Wise? If both found themselves in the same region but each reacted differently to their total environment in their religious reaction, then that total environment cannot have been the 'ultimate' cause of their religious reaction, if reaction it is at all.

Despite these progressive tendencies in Luther's thought, however, the latter had not been able to free himself from the otherworldliness of the Christian Middle Ages. Precisely these 'medieval' tendencies in his theology were strengthened under the influence of the activity of the revolutionary peasants.[95] But even the progressive tendencies in Luther's thought had not been responsible for his importance in the early phase of the Reformation or for the progressive role he played in this period, for his teachings contained important aspects which attacked precisely the progressive process of secularization. His progressive role had really been forced upon him by the dialectic of the class struggle which had pushed him forward relentlessly from position to position until the break with Rome, which he had not wanted, had become inevitable.[96] But when Steinmetz came to portray the course of events which led to this break, he was forced to come back to the Leipzig disputation and other intellectual milestones in Luther's career which had convinced the latter of the inevitability of the break with Rome.[97]

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[94] *Ibid.*, p. 90.

[95] The similarity to Müller-Streisand's thesis of the re-catholization of Luther's thought is obvious.

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[96] *Ibid*., p. 92. Had Steinmetz been more specific, he would have stated that although Luther's theology was progressive and 'bourgeois' insofar as it pertained to the establishment of a new church, yet insofar as it pertained to other aspects it was medieval and feudalistic. Either the criterion with which Steinmetz judged this same theology was at fault or else Luther had involved himself in hopeless contradictions.

[97] *Ibid*., pp. 98-102. With regard to the Humanists, Steinmetz stated: ". . . Zahlreiche Humanisten schreckten vor der *Konsequenz* der lutherischen *Gedankenführung* [my italics] zurück . . . ," p. 100. Yet he failed to bring this *Gedankenführung* into any kind of integral relationship with the 'objective' social or class conditions of the time.

According to Steinmetz and the other Marxists, Luther had sought to destroy ecclesiastical feudalism. However, the increasing friction between the various classes of the time made it inevitable that the revolt against the papacy should lead directly to an attack on secular feudalism, for only the total destruction of feudalism in Germany could have insured the destruction of Roman influence. Thus, after 1521, Luther himself was forced to decide whether or not he was prepared to draw the 'objective' conclusions of his call to destroy ecclesiastical feudalism and support the social revolution initiated from below. Luther's negative decision was not merely the result of his intellectual development, stated Steinmetz, for it had been determined much more by those social forces which he began increasingly to represent. Thus his decision had not so much determined events as events had determined his decision.[98]

Luther's attitude toward the radical movement became apparent only too quickly upon his return from the Wartburg. Once in Wittenberg, he turned decisively against the disturbers of the peace and stated that reform should be effected only by the princes and the governments of the cities, not by popular anarchic movements.[99] The Wittenberg incident was quickly followed by Luther's pamphlet, "Eine treue Vermahnung," in which he turned against a social reformation and demanded that the ruling powers alone carry out the ecclesiastical reformation. Steinmetz, however, had to admit that these ideas were not new for Luther since they had already been expressed in his pamphlet on the "Freiheit eines Christenmenschen." Now, however, they were used to dampen the initiative of the masses. Thus Luther turned his Reformation over to the princes and the weaker bourgeois under the control of the princes. Henceforth, therefore, the Reformation represented only that part of the city bourgeoisie which had become dependent upon the princes and which had failed to play its historical leading role in the frühbürgerliche Revolution.[100]

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[98] _Ibid_., p. 106.

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[99] *Ibid*., pp. 108-109. It is interesting to note that Steinmetz portrayed Luther's recapture of control in Wittenberg in the following words: ". . . Luther bemühte sich dabei sehr, die Massen zurückzugewinnen: Er verdammte keineswegs grundsätzlich die Eigenmächtigkeiten der Wittenberger Unruhen, sondern stellte die Dinge so dar, als wäre der Zeitpunkt für Neuerungen noch nicht gekommen, da nicht alle bereits stark im Glauben seien. Mit der mangelnden Rücksichtsnahme auf die im Glauben Schwachen motivierte er seine strikte Ablehnung der Wittenberger Vorgänge. Auf diese Weise verstand es Luther, durch *eine geschichte Kombination von zornigem Ausbruch und demagogischer Beteuerung die Führung der Bewegung erneut an sich zu reissen* [my italics] . . . ." Had Müntzer won over the masses to his cause in a similar manner, Steinmetz would most assuredly have stated that the masses had 'flocked' to him. Now, however, Luther had *torn* the leadership back into his own hands. Obviously, according to Marxist theory, the masses should not have turned back to Luther anymore, but to the radicals whom Luther had forced to leave Wittenberg. It could be, therefore, that the popular movement did not have to proceed to radical measures *zwangsläufig*.

Therefore Luther had not played such a vacillating role in the history of the Reformation after all, and Bensing could state that ". . . it is not to be denied that Luther's decision against the insurgent peasants had to follow necessarily from his fundamental theological position, especially from his view concerning the ruling powers and the obedience due them . . . ."[101] Nevertheless, a poorly advised, anti-humane, and reactionary position could not be sanctioned because it derived from the 'inner necessity' of a theological system. Certainly it would be wrong to attempt to impute superficial political motives to Luther;

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[100] Ibid., p. 109. Steinmetz is obviously trying to make Luther appear to be a more consistent representative of the bourgeoisie, or at least of a part of it.

[101] Manfred Bensing, Thomas Müntzer und der Thüringer Aufstand 1525 (Berlin, 1966), p. 198. See also p. 200.

he was defending his Reformation, and in so doing admonished pope, princes, and Fuggers as well as the peasants. He was even willing to distort the truth in order to do this.[102]

Luther had realized, continued Bensing, that his teaching stood or fell with the established order of his day.[103] Thus Luther's pamphlets against the peasants had not so much been attempts to spur the princes on to suppress the revolt—for this purpose they arrived too late—as they were attempts to justify the bloodbath of Frankenhausen and the bloody suppression of the peasant movement in Thuringia as such.[104]

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[102] Ibid., p. 198. Bensing refers to Luther's distortion of Müntzer's teachings.

[103] Ibid., p. 200. This, of course, is nonsense. Luther could, as he himself stated, have sided with the peasants. "Und wenn ich lust hette mich an euch [princes] zu rechen, So mocht ich itzt ynn die faust lachen vnd den bawren zusehen odder mich auch zu yhnen schlahen, vnd die sachen helffen erger machen. Aber da soll mich meyn Gott fur beheuten, wie bisher . . . ." "Ermahnung zum Frieden auf die zwölf Artikel der Bauerschaft in Schwaben," WA, 18 296. God would have taken care of the Reformation even had the princes not seen fit to support it.

[104] Ibid., p. 197.

C. Luther as National Economist

In the early part of this chapter it was noted that Marx had been aware of Luther's criticism of the evils inherent in the fiscal policies of commercial capitalism and had whole-heartedly approved of them. These comments now served as the foundation for a study of Luther's economic thought by Günter Fabiunke.[105] In contrast to the 'bourgeois' interpreters of this aspect of Luther's thought who had believed the latter's utterances on economic matters to have sprung from his religious convictions, Fabiunke intended to ". . . lift the religious veil behind which Luther had purposely hidden his ideas on economic problems . . . ."[106] In reality, Luther's economic thought had been ". . . a reflection of changing social and economic conditions . . . ."[107] Fabiunke was therefore convinced that his own interpretation, which proceeded from these "changing social and economic conditions" would ". . . break through the dust-cloud of religious mysticism . . ."[108] and lay bare the actual foundations of Luther's economic thought.

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[105] ". . . Luther war in der Tat der erste bedeutende ökonomische Denker Deutschlands an der Schwelle des bürgerlichen Zeitalters. Karl Marx, der Luther in den meisten seiner Werke so häufig als Autorität anführte und auf diese Weise die erstrangige Bedeutung vieler ökonomischer Gedanken Luthers würdigte, nannte Luther keineswegs zufällig den 'ältesten deutschen Nationalökonom.'" Günter Fabiunke, Martin Luther als Nationalökonom (Berlin, 1963), p. 6. With regard to 'bourgeois' studies on the topic, Fabiunke had the following megnanimous words of praise: ". . . Viele dieser Autoren machten sich hierbei durch emsiges und gewissenhaftes Zusammentragen der überaus zahlreichen und weit verstreuten Äusserungen Luthers zu ökonomischen Fragen durchaus verdient. Wir wollen ihnen für die von ihnen hierbei geleistete und uns ausserordentlich dienlich gewordene Vorarbeit nicht unsern Dank versagen. Einigen von ihnen können wir darüber hinaus auch bestätigen, dass ihnen in bestimmten wichtigen Einzelfragen durchaus so manche gute und wertvolle Erklärung des ökonomischen Denkens Luthers gelungen ist . . . ." Ibid., p. 7.

According to Fabiunke, Luther had grown up in a ". . . kleinbürgerliches milieu which had left a lasting impression upon his mentality . . . ."[109] Added to this were the peasant characteristics which Luther manifested all his life.[110] But when Fabiunke came to determine Luther's class position, which had served as a basis for his economic thought, he had to admit that ". . . Luther's subjective position with respect to the social forces of his time and the objective class character of his utterances and actions manifest such important transformations in the various periods of his life that any summary attempt to determine Luther's class position must be predestined to failure. The Luther of 1517 represented a different social strata than the Luther of 1525 . . . ."[111] But if this was the case, why did Luther change his class position?

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[106] Ibid., p. 9.

[107] Ibid.

[108] Ibid., p. 10.

[109] Ibid., p. 26.

[110] Ibid., pp. 26-27.

Like Engels whom he quoted, Fabiunke believed that Luther's opposition to the established church of his day had been a general one in the beginning. However, when the social classes began to crystallize and the conflict manifest itself, Luther had been forced to choose between the two opposing camps. The question that had faced Luther in this choice had been whether he would content himself merely with reform or whether he would proceed to radical social revolution.[112]

With his *Address to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation* Luther's national opposition had reached its climax. From then on his fundamental conservative bourgeois class outlook had begun to manifest itself more and more. But the seeds of this outlook had already been present in Luther's Ninety-five Theses and his writings of 1518 and 1519. Faced by the increasingly vociferous radical wing of the Reformation in 1520-1521, Luther had chosen to retreat from his call to revolution against the Roman hierarchy and to advocate peaceful change.[113] The more Luther had distanced himself from the revolutionary wing, however, the more his conservative bourgeois party had fallen under the influence of the princes, and the more Luther had become a princely time-server.[114]

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[111] *Ibid*., pp. 39-40. Fabiunke continued: "Wollten wir uns etwa damit begnügen, Luther lediglich als *bürgerlichen Ideologen* schlechthin zu charakterisieren, so verschlösse uns das jedes wirkliche Verständnis für den spezifischen historischen Charakter seines bürgerlichen ökonomischen Denkens. Es liesse vor allem die ideologische Entwicklung des Ökonomen Luthers selbst völlig ausser acht. Ein solches Vorgehen würde faktisch bedeuten, das ökonomische Denken Luthers in ein starres Schema zu pressen. Dabei müsste dann zwangsläufig alles das übersehen werden und unerklärt bleiben, was sich nicht in einen solchen un-historischen dogmatischen Rahmen hineinzwängen liesse. Das wäre eine wissenschaftlich unzulässige Methode, die uns in mancher Hinsicht in die nächste geistige Nachbarschaft mit der idealistischen bürgerlichen Luther-Interpretation bringen müsste." *Ibid*., p. 40.

[112] *Ibid*., p. 48.

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[113] Ibid., p. 49.

[114] It would only seem fair that the Marxists should, now that they have come to power in certain countries, allow their churches to turn against the government, yes they should even welcome it, if they intend to remain so indefatigable in their condemnation of Luther's support of the established order. Quite on the contrary, however, they demand of the churches in their jurisdiction unquestionable obedience, if they do not suppress them altogether. See Götting, "Unabhängige evangelische Kirche in der DDR," Ökumenischer Pressedienst, 34 (1967), 6, 10. But if they demand this of the churches under their jurisdiction they have no moral right to condemn Luther. They do have an ideological 'right,' however, for, according to their theory, the princes were the representatives of a decaying feudal order and should have been driven from power. Those, however, who do not recognize that the proletariat is the class of the future and oppose its 'representatives' are reactionary and must be suppressed. The very fact, however, that Luther supported the princes, although the Marxists would like to make a bourgeois reformer of him, should indicate to them that Luther was not motivated by class motives. In this respect it is interesting to note what Fabiunke says about the effects of Luther's teachings with respect to obedience to governments for the recent past: "Wir selbst aber haben in unserer Generation die furchtbaren historischen Folgen dieser unsittlichen Lehre Luthers vom passiven und leidenden Gehorsam gegenüber *jeglicher Obrigkeit* [my italics], gleich ob diese gerecht oder ungerecht ist, erlebt als grosse Teile des deutschen Volkes den braunen 'Herren' Gehorsam leisteten . . . ." Ibid., p. 56

Rather than restrict himself to his topic, however, Fabiunke indulged his moral indignation in the usual Marxist tirade against Luther's stand in the Peasant War. But after he had portrayed Luther as the revolutionary turned reactionary, Fabiunke was forced to admit that ". . . Luther's ideological development manifested very serious vacillations and contradictions . . . ,"[115] but these he explained away with the statement that all reformers manifested the same tendency. In this development so full of contradictions, Luther had even ". . . experienced relapses into the one as well as the other direction . . . ."[116] Thus progressive elements had remained side by side with conservative ones.

Fabiunke's problem, of course, was that since even Marx had approved of Luther's utterances on certain aspects of economics, this economic thought could not very well be portrayed as bourgeois. Yet precisely those writings of Luther which referred to the practice of usury and other aspects of early commercial capitalistic fiscal policies had been written in the various periods of his life, with the most important one written as late as 1540 in his reactionary period.[117] Hence the earliest one, written in 1519 should have been at least more revolutionary than the last in 1540. Strangely enough, however, the point of view represented remained the same and Fabiunke had to modify his statements about the class character of Luther's utterances on economic matters to such an extent that the category he used became meaningless. He chose to do this rather than give up the category, however.

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[115] Ibid., p. 61.

[116] Ibid.

[117] These writings range all the way from "Kleiner Sermon vom Wucher" of 1519 to "Vermahnung an die Pfarrherren, wider den Wucher zu predigen," of 1540. Yet despite the fact that these utterances ranged from his revolutionary to his arch-reactionary period, the position they manifest is the same!

Having delineated Luther's social milieu and having polemicized against the 'idealistic' interpreters of Luther's economic thought, Fabiunke was still forced to admit that the point of departure for this economic thought had been Luther's teaching of the two kingdoms.[118] But, as was to be expected, even this teaching mirrored the bourgeois element in Luther's thought. Yet as Fabiunke proceeds to tell his tale one does indeed gain the impression that Luther's attititude toward economic matters was determined by his theological position,[119] for Fabiunke was forced to bring long passages in which Luther based his arguments on biblical teachings. This impression is not wiped out by the fact that Fabiunke was always careful to point out the 'real' source of Luther's position; the passages from Luther speak for themselves too forcefully.[120]

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[118] ". . . Der entscheidende Springpunkt zum Verständnis aller theologisch verbrämten Auffassungen Luthers von der gesellschaftlichen Wirklichkeit und damit zugleich auch der entscheidende Ausgangspunkt seines gesamten ökonomischen Denkens ist seine 'Lehre von den Zwei Reichen.' Sie durchzieht das gesamte schriftlich festgehaltene Werk Luthers und ist einer der wichtigsten Bestandteile seines gesamten theologischen Systems . . . ." Ibid., p. 66. But despite the fact that this teaching was fundamental to all Luther's thought with regard to society, Fabiunke failed to apply it in analyzing Luther's decisions in the Peasant War.

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[119] Fabiunke himself stated: "Im allgemeinen könnte man jetzt vielleicht auf Grund unserer Darstellung von der Lutherschen Theologie annehmen, dass Luther selbst sich nur wenig oder gar nicht um die wirtschaftlichen Verhältnisse und ihre Probleme gekümmert hätte . . . ." Ibid., p. 75. Or again, toward the end: "Das erste unmittelbar ins Auge springende Kennzeichen des ökonomischen Denkens Luthers ist seine ausgesprochen ethisch-religiöse Bestimmtheit, die religiöse Verkleidung seines ökonomischen Denkens. Sie ist so stark, dass bisher sämtliche bürgerliche Autoren nahezu einmütig den Ökonomen Luther hinter dem Theologen Luther verschwinden liessen . . . ." Ibid., p. 137.

[120] A few examples must suffice: "Vom Kaufmann, der sich an diese ethischreligiös begründeten, keineswegs dem realen Charakter der Warenproduktion entsprechende Forderungen hält und also einen 'gerechten' und 'naturgemässen,' von Luther ausdrücklich anerkannten und moralisch gebilligten Handel betreibt, sagt Luther . . . ." Ibid., p. 110. Or again: "Auf der Grundlage der Bergpredigt forderte Luther vom gläubigen Christen in erster Linie eine bedingungslose Hilfsbereitschaft und Barmherzigkeit gegeüber dem Nächsten, ökonomisch ausgedrückt: geben ohne zu nehmen, zumindest aber ohne mehr zu nehmen . . . ." Ibid., p. 120. And: "Da nach Luther also derjenige, der Zins nimmt, gegen Gerechtigkeit und Gleichwertigkeit verstösst, weil er mehr zurückverlangt, als er gegeben hat, da er für Luther vor allem aber das Liebesgebot Gottes verletzt, weil er in egoistischer Habgier die Notlage des Nächsten ausnutzt, um diesen zu schädigen, sprach sich Luther grundsätzlich gegen jeglichen Zins aus, verurteilte er jedes Zinsnehmen als Wucher; ganz gleich, ob der Zins hoch oder niedrig, bescheiden oder räuberisch ist." Ibid., 123.

With regard to Luther's economic thought, Fabiunke had to come to the conclusion that the former's position had been essentially anti-capitalistic.[121] He had to admit that with regard to such ideas as the 'just price'[122] and usury, Luther had stood in a long and venerable tradition, ideas which the feudalized church had propounded as well. But whereas the Catholic Church had begun to make exceptions in its application of these teachings on usury, Luther reverted to a severe theoretical condemnation of the practice.[123]

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[121] "Diese bemerkenswerte Empfehlung kennzeichnet sehr drastisch den fatalistischen Schlusspunkt, den Luther unter seine gesamte antikapitalistische Lehre vom Handel setzte . . . ." Ibid., p. 118. And again: "Empört über die Art und Weise, in der die kapitalistischen Wucherer die von ihnen betriebene Ausplünderung des Volkes moralisch zu vertuschen versuchten, entlarvte Luther, wie Marx lobend betonte 'in der altmodischen, wenn auch stets erneuten, Form des Kapitalisten, im Wucherer, . . . sehr gut die Herrschsucht, als Element des Bereicherungstriebes.'" Ibid., p. 122

[122] "Luthers Lehre vom Preis knüpft unmittelbar an einzelne Seiten der bis dahin herrschenden feudal-scholastischen 'Lehre vom gerechten Preis' an . . . ." Ibid., p. 109.

[123] "War die katholische Kirche schon mehr und mehr dazu übergegangen, Ausnahmen vom Zinsverbot zuzulassen, so negierte Luther alle diese Ausnahmen grundsätzlich . . . ." Ibid., p. 123. Thus in this respect at least the feudal Catholic Church had become more 'bourgeois' than Luther.

Fabiunke therefore was forced to conclude that Luther had been blind to ". . . the objective laws of social evolution with which the practice of usury in his time was still in overall agreement . . . ,"[124] for it had been a fiscal policy of capitalism and this was the period of nascent capitalism. Yet after page upon page in which Luther's, for the Marxist, correct attitude toward usury was demonstrated, Fabiunke came to the conclusion, on the basis of several specific instances, that Luther had not really applied his theory to concrete situations. Thus, in effect, Luther had paved the way for capitalistic policies after all.[125]

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[124] Ibid., p. 127.

[125] "Während Luther also in der für ihn so typischen Weise den Wucher einerseits in der Theorie als 'unchristlich' und 'unnatürlich' verurteilte, ja sogar ausdrücklich betonte 'was wider Gott, Recht und Natur stehe, das ein Nullus,' indem er in der Praxis erklärte, 'nur der Fürst habe das Recht, solche (Wucher-) Verträge zu zerreissen, ohne dabei an seiner Ehre oder am Glauben gescholten zu werden'; behauptete er, 'nicht der einzelne Schuldner kann den Zinsvertrag als ungültig erklären, sondern nur der Fürst in seiner Eigenschaft als Landesherr.'

"Radikal in der Theorie, zahm in der Praxis, oppositionell in Worten, gehorsam in Taten--das ist auch der Charakter der Stellung Luthers zum Wucher . . . ." Ibid., p. 127.

D. Criticism

In his study on Luther and Melanchthon, Leo Stern made the typically Marxist assertion that ". . . Only the Marxist historical method is able to demonstrate that the religious and political quarrels of the Reformation reflect the class struggles of the time . . . ."[126] If this is to be more than mere salve for a bad conscience, then the expectation that the Marxists should have come to a fairly unanimous conclusion regarding this problem is not an unreasonable one. This, however, they have failed to do. Not only have they not reached a unanimous answer to the problem, but they have failed to prove convincingly their theoretical presupposition that ideologies do in fact reflect their material base.

In reliance upon Zimmermann, Engels had made the somewhat fantastic assertion that Luther's teachings had not gone beyond other previous 'bourgeois' heresies; at least in the initial stages Luther's teachings had had no characteristics of their own. What Engels had asserted in reliance upon Zimmermann, Kautsky and Mehring reiterated. The staggering amount of Luther research since Engels' time, however, has made such an unconsidered judgment seem utterly ridiculous and therefore Kleinschmidt could no longer accept Engels' assessment. But despite the fact that Kleinschmidt was willing to revise Engels on this particular point and stressed Luther's unique theological discovery, he made no essential change in Engels' picture of Luther. Quite on the contrary, Luther's theological discovery was made to fit into Engels' frame of reference. Essentially, therefore, one must conclude that it really does not matter to the Marxist what Luther thought, it can always be made to reflect the material base. This, indeed, is the most disconcerting aspect of the Marxist analysis of intellectual history: it explains everything and yet nothing.

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[126] Leo Stern, Martin Luther und Phillip Melanchthon, p. 11.

Müller-Streisand, however, went even farther than Kleinschmidt and placed Luther's entire theological thought into the frame of reference Engels had set for Kautsky. Engels, who had known nothing of this intellectual development, had developed his thesis of Luther's class metamorphosis on the basis of the latter's seemingly varied reactions to the social movements in the early years of the Reformation. In order to make the Marxist theory of material base and ideological superstructure at all meaningful, therefore, Luther's intellectual development had to be made to reflect these political actions. Müller-Streisand, however, was followed by Fabiunke who had not a little difficulty in fitting Luther's consistent attitude toward economic matters, an attitude, moreover, which was not in tune with the capitalistic theories of the time and should have been were it to reflect the new material base at all, into his vacillating class conduct. But then along came Bensing who asserted that Luther's attitude toward the peasants had been consistent after all. This meant, of course, although Bensing did not say so, that Engels' frame of reference did not apply to Luther's intellectual development. Had Bensing gone a step farther, he would have been compelled to point out, therefore, that Kleinschmidt, Müller-Streisand, Leo Stern, and Fabiunke had utilized a faulty frame of reference with which to analyze Luther's intellectual development, for Engels had imputed wrong motives to Luther's actions.

This development in Marxist Luther historiography is due to a change in perspective. Engels, as was noted earlier in this chapter, had seen only what Luther had done in the course of the Peasant War. These actions appeared to him to be the actions of a revolutionary turned arch-reactionary. In his letter to Kautsky of February 1, 1892, he had asked the latter to analyze Luther's intellectual development from this perspective. Although Kautsky failed to do so, other Marxists have done so. Bensing, however, did not begin his enquiry with Luther's actions, which seemed contradictory, but proceeded from his Gedankensystem[127] and arrived at a different conclusion. If, however, Engels was correct in his analysis from the perspective of Luther's actions which, according to the former, reflected the progress of the class struggle and ultimately the material conditions, and Bensing was correct in his analysis from Luther's theological or intellectual position, then the only conclusion one can legitimately draw is that the ultimately motivating material conditions did not really determine Luther's intellectual development. And if this is a correct deduction from an observation of Marxist Luther historiography, then another conclusion, that the theoretical principle behind the Marxist analysis is wrong, must be drawn as well.

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[127] Bensing, Thomas Müntzer, p. 198.

Franz Lau, the Leipzig editor of the Luther Jahrbuch, who has attempted to correct various aspects of the Marxist interpretation of the Reformation over the years,[128] has stated that ". . . There is little agreement regarding Luther's role in the Peasant War. More specifically, the disagreement is not about *how* Luther *stood* to this question; his attitude toward the Peasant War comes to the fore clearly enough in his so-called *Bauernschriften*. The disagreement becomes apparent when one comes to determine the causes for this attitude . . . ."[129] The Marxists have been able to maintain a fairly closed front on this question until recently precisely because they have concerned themselves almost exclusively only with how Luther dealt with the peasants. This approach was already apparent in Zimmermann's Bauernkrieg upon which Engels based his analysis of Luther's actions. For Engels, however, it was even less important to enquire why Luther had acted as he had than it was for Zimmermann because the Marxist theory stated explicitly that ideological processes were mere reflexes of the material, social, and hence class conditions of an age. If, therefore, Luther had been forced to his decisions by the class conditions of his time, as Engels asserted, his theology, insofar as it determined his attitude toward the peasants, should have been a mere rationalization of his actions. But precisely this Marxist Luther historiography has proven to be false. For when Bensing proceeded to answer the question from an analysis of Luther's thought, he came to a different conclusion concerning the causes of Luther's attitude than Engels who had approached the problem from the point of view of Luther's actions. Not only did his attitude become consistent now, his actions also appeared to be consistent. It should therefore be obvious that the Marxist theory of material base and ideological superstructure has been found wanting, for had the theory been correct, then an approach from either side should have resulted in the same conclusion. Therefore, we cannot approach the problem from the Marxist perspective:[130] we must take into serious consideration the theological or other reasons for Luther's stand and ask ourselves why Luther came into conflict with the social-revolutionary movement of his day.

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[128] Particularly in the following three essays: (1) "Die prophetische Apokalyptik Thomas Müntzers und Luthers Absage an die Bauernrevolution," *D. Werner Elert, Gedenkschrift* (Berlin, 1955), hrsg. F. Hübner, W. Maurer, E. Kinder; (2) "Luther—Reaktionär oder Revolutionär?" *Luther—Mitteilungen der Luthergesellschaft*, 3 (Berlin, 1957), 109-33; and (3) "Der Bauernkrieg und das angebliche Ende der lutherischen Reformation als spontaner Volksbewegung," *Luther Jahrbuch*, XXVI (1959), 109-34.

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[129] Franz Lau, "Der Bauernkrieg und das angebliche Ende der Reformation," p. 109.

Consequently, the tragedy of Luther's involvement in the Peasant War must be sought in the simultaneous social and religious crisis of 16th-century Germany and the interaction of the forces advocating social and religious change. The Marxists may well be correct in their assumption that the reasons for the social revolt of the 16th century were material causes and that the insurgents used, or at least tried to use, Luther's teachings to justify their material demands.[131] Luther accused them of precisely the same thing.[132] Luther, however, who represented the impact of ideas upon his society if ever anyone did,[133] did not wish to see the Gospel 'misused' in this manner, for the Gospel commanded the Christian to obey a different ethic: ". . . always to give in, suffer, and not demand one's rights . . . ."[134] It is obvious, therefore, that Luther approached the peasant problem from a different perspective than the peasants did, from the point of view of the Christian teachings as he understood them. Thus, rather than view 'ideology' as a reflection of social conditions, it must be viewed, in this instance at any rate, as being to a certain degree in conflict with it. Only this point of view explains Luther's condemnation not only of the peasants, but also of the princes, userers, and others. One must therefore look for the interrelation of the intellectual with the social realm, one cannot view the intellectual as a mere reflection of the social.

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[130] A criticism of the Marxist analysis of Luther's intellectual development will not be indulged in here, first of all because, in essence, it has already been made suspect through its use of a faulty frame of reference, and secondly because it would lead too far afield!

[131] Thus, for example, Engels' remark that the Bible became a powerful weapon in the hands of the insurgents.

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[132] "Aber ehe denn ich mich vmbsihe, faren sie [the peasants] furt vnd greyffen mit der faust dreyn, mit vergessen yhrs erbietens, rauben vnd toben vnd thun wie die rasenden hunde, Dabey man nu wol sihet, was sie ynn yhrem falschen synn gehabt haben, vnd das eyttel erlogen ding sey gewesen, was sie vnter dem namen des Evangeli ynn den zwelff artickeln haben furgewendet, Kurtz vmb, eyttel teuffels werck treyben sie . . . ." "Wider die räuberischen und mörderischen Rotten der Bauern," WA, XVIII, 357.

[133] Paul Hacker, in a recent book entitled, Das Ich im Glauben bei Martin Luther (Graz, 1966), has remarked: ". . . Wenn es in den letzten 500 Jahren überhaupt einen Menschen gegeben hat, den nicht Ereignisse seiner Zeit zu dem gemacht haben, der er wesentlich wurde und als der er wirkte, sondern der, umgekehrt, seinerseits den geistigen (und damit auch vielen äusseren) Ereignissen von Jahrhunderten seinen Stempel aufgeprägt hat . . . so ist es Martin Luther gewesen . . . ," p. 16.

[134] "Ermahnung zum Frieden auf die zwölf Artickel der Bauerschaft in Schwaben," WA, XVIII, 309.

If this is indeed the central issue of Luther's involvement in the Peasant War, then it would seem that Luther recognized the nature of the problem much more clearly than peasants, princes, or anyone else. And well he might have, for it was his theology, his Reformation which seemed to him in danger of being compromised by the social movements of his day. The truth of this statement is perhaps best illustrated in his Bauernschriften. It was a truth that impressed itself so forcefully upon him precisely because he had divided the world into two realms: the temporal and the spiritual.[135]

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[135] For a study of Luther's teaching of the two kingdoms, see Franz Lau, Luthers Lehre von den beiden Reichen (Berlin, 1952).

Fabiunke had the key to the interpretation of Luther's *Bauernschriften* in his hands, for he asserted that the theory of the two kingdoms ran through Luther's writings like a red line. But although he applied it in his analysis of Luther's economic thought where it suited his purpose, he failed to apply it to analyze Luther's involvement in the Peasant War. Yet, had he read Luther's *Bauernschriften* with any care and not just repeated Marxist commonplaces, he would have realized that Luther himself gave his theory of the two kingdoms as the key to the understanding of his writings against the peasants.[136] Luther blamed his contemporary critics for having failed to see that this was the key despite the fact that he had written often and extensively on the theory.

Anyone who reads Luther's great Reformation pamphlets cannot help but be impressed with the fact that Luther envisioned a spiritual renewal within the Church through the effective working of the Word of God. Therefore he could say with conviction in his "Eine treue Vermahnung zu allen Christen, sich zu hüten vor Aufruhr und

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[136] ". . . Den andern, die durch dise verfuͤret odder sonst so schwach sind, das sie meyn buchlin nicht mugen mit den spruͤchen Christi vergleichen, sey dis gesagt. Es sind zweyerley reich, Eyns ist Gottis reich, das ander ist der wellt reich, wie ich so offt geschrieben habe, das michs wundert, wie man solchs noch nicht wisse odder mercke, denn wer dise zwey reichs weys recht von eynander zu scheyden, der wird sich freylich an meynem buchlin nicht ergern . . . ." "Ein Sendbrief von dem harten Büchlein wider die Bauern," *WA*, XVIII, 389.

Empörung," that ". . . Those who read and understand my teaching aright will not incite to revolution, for they have not learned revolt from me . . . ."[137] God was the great mover in human history and the spiritual renewal would come through His Word; it was a spiritual battle and should remain such.[138] Yet despite the fact that Luther was convinced God would do it through His Word, he felt compelled to instruct the rulers as well as the populace at large in their duties. Reform was permissible if initiated in an orderly manner by the governing authorities; indeed, in his Address to the German Nobility he called on the emperor and the princes to take the initiative in this reform if the ecclesiastical authorities failed to do so.[139] The common man, however, was to refrain from inciting revolt or initiating reforms on his own account. Only at the behest of his ruler was he to act.[140]

Luther realized clearly enough that the reforms he asked for in the Church would have social consequences, in fact it was precisely the Church's involvement in the affairs which belonged rightly in the realm of the temporal kingdom he polemicized against.[141] Yet he most certainly did not expect the Church to give up its influence in the temporal realm; this influence, however, should be relegated strictly to the spiritual realm.[142] Therefore, when he advised the princes to reform the Church in this manner—and they could only have removed the Church from its usurped influence in the temporal realm, not induced it to exercise its spiritual influence, for only God could accomplish this—Luther believed he was only telling the princes to take back what rightfully belonged to them in the first place.[143]

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[137] WA, VIII, 681.

[138] WA, VIII, 683.

[139] WA, VI, 404.

[140] WA; VIII, 680.

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[141] "Gleych wie nw die, szo mann itzt geystlich heyst, oder priester, bischoff, odder bepst, sein von den andern Christen nit weytter noch wirdiger gescheyden, dan das sie das wort gottis vnnd die sacrament sollen handeln, das ist yhr werck vnnd ampt . . . ." "An den Christlichen Adel," WA, VI, 409. And a little further on: "Zum ersten ists grewlich vnd erschrecklich antzusehen, das der ubirst in der Christenheit, der sich Christi Vicarium vnd sanct Peters nachfolger rumet, szo weltlich vnd prechtlich feret, das yhn darinnen kein kunig, kein keyszer mag erlangen vnd gleich werden, vnd in dem 'der allerheyligist vnd geystlichst' sich lesset nennen, weltlicher weszen ist, dan die welt selbst ist. Er tregt ein dreyfeltig kron, wo die hochsten kunig nur ein kron tragenn: gleicht sich das mit dem armen Christo vnd sanct Peter, so ists ein new gleichen. Man plerret, es sey ketzerisch, wo man dawidder redt, man wil aber auch nit horen, wie unchristlich und ungotlich solch weszen sey, Ich halt aber, wen er betten mit threnen solt fur got, er must yhe solch kronen ablegen, die weil unszer got keinen hoffart mag leyden. Nu solt sein ampt nichts anders sein, dan teglich weynen vnnd beten fur die Christenheit, vnd ein exempel aller demut furtragen." Ibid., p. 415.

[142] See previous note.

Luther, therefore, believed himself to be involved in a spiritual battle whose purpose it was to bring the Church back to its spiritual function, a function, however, which was to be carried out in the temporal realm.[144] The Christians, who, as members of the spiritual realm also belonged to the temporal realm, were to exercise the ethics of the Sermon on the Mount in the secular realm unless they had a direct or indirect command from God to do otherwise because of their office, as, for example, the princes.[145]

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[143] "Drumb sol weltlich Christlich gewalt yhr ampt uben frey unvorhyndert, unangesehen obs Bapst, bischoff, priester sey den sie trifft, wer schuldig ist der leyde: was geistlich recht da widder gesagt hat, ist lauter ertichtet Romisch vormessenheit . . . ." _Ibid_., p. 409.

[144] Lau, _Luthers Lehre von den beiden Reichen_, p. 18, has correctly stated that, ". . . Die Frage nach dem geistlichen Regiment ist aber die Frage nach Luthers Kirchenverständnis . . . ."

[145] "Aus dem Ringen des Schriftauslegers um die Bergpredigt mit ihrer Aufforderung zum Leiden und Tragen und um die Realitäten der Welt, in der gestraft und zurechtgewiesen und gezüchtigt werden muss—und diese Realitäten kommen in der Schrift auch zur Aussprache—, ist Luthers Zweireichelrhre entstanden . . . ." _Ibid_., p. 35.

The Christian should not, therefore, mix the two realms to the extent that he attempt to justify temporal advantages with Christian teachings. This would be to seek selfish advantage through a hypocritical adherence to God's Word, an affront God would not tolerate. In the realm of the social, therefore, the Christian had no right to make demands which were natural and reasonable in themselves on the basis of the Gospel, for the Gospel taught that the Christian should sooner suffer an injustice than demand justice.[146]

According to Luther, the peasants were attempting to do precisely this in their Twelve Articles: they were using the Scriptures to justify their social and material demands for improvement.[147] Luther had no reason to quarrel with these demands; in the secular realm they might well be just and should be granted.[148] Yet in the spiritual realm they could not be demanded. If the peasants were to insist on their demands and proceed to revolution in order to attain them, then Luther asked that they stop pretending to be Christians,[149] for he was not willing to see the Christian teaching adjusted to justify the social demands of the peasants. Despite this fact, Luther would have been pleased to see the princes meet the just demands of the peasants,[150] indeed, Christian princes would do this of their own accord. Rather than adjust the Christian teachings so that they could be made to justify the demands of the peasants, Luther asked both peasants and princes to allow their

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[146] ". . . Darumb sage ich aber mal, Ich lasse ewr sachen seyn, wie gut vnd recht sie seyn kan, weyl yhr sie aber selbs wollt verteydigen vnd nicht gewalt noch vnrecht leyden, mugt yhr thun vnd lassen, was euch gott nicht weret, Aber den Christlichen namen, den Christlichen namen sage ich, den lasst stehen, vnd macht den nicht zum schanddeckel, ewrs vngedultigem, vnfridlichem, vnchristlichen furnehmens, Den will ich euch nicht lassen noch gonnen, sondern beyde mit schrifften vnd wortten euch abreyssen nach meynem vermugen so lange sich eyne ader regt ynn meym leybe. Denn es wird euch nicht gelingen, odder wird euch zu verderben an leyb vnd seele gelingen." "Ermahnung zum Frieden," _WA_, XVIII, 314.

[147] _Ibid._, pp. 307-24.

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[148] To the princes he said: ". . . Dazu ym welltlichen regiment nicht mehr thut, denn das yhr schindet vnd schatzt, ewrn pracht vnd hochmüt zu furen bis der arme gemeyne man nicht kan noch mag lenger ertragen . . . ." _Ibid_., p. 293; and to the peasants: "Hieraus ist nü leichtlich auff alle ewr artickel geantwortet, Den ob sie gleich alle naturlich recht vnd billich weren . . . ." _Ibid_., p. 319.

[149] "So soll nü vnd müss ewr titel vnd namen diesser seyn, Das yhr die leute seyt, die darumb streytten, das sie nicht vnrecht noch vbels leyden wollen noch sollen wie das die natur gibt, Den namen sollt yhr furen vnd Christus namen mit friden lassen . . . ." _Ibid_., p. 316. See also _ibid_., p. 322.

[150] _Ibid_., pp. 298-99.

Christian principles to regulate their social action.[151] Both Christian prince and Christian peasant had their God ordained function even in the temporal realm which was to benefit their fellow Christian.[152] But precisely because neither the princes nor the peasants were really willing to allow their Christian principles to regulate their social actions, or better still, because neither were Christians, for their social actions betrayed their non-Christian character, Luther asked them to solve their differences on a non-Christian level.[153]

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[151] To the princes he remarked: "Wolan, wyl yhr denn vrsach seyt, solchs gottes zorns, wirds on zweyffel auch vber euch ausgehen, wo yhr euch noch nicht mit der zeyt bessert . . . ." Ibid., p. 294. In his "Wider die räuberischen . . . Bauern," he put it positively: "Aber die oberkeyt, so Christlich ist, vnd das Evangelion leydet, der halben auch die bawren keynen scheyn widder sie haben, soll hie mit furchten handeln, Und zum ersten die sachen Gott heym geben vnd bekennen, das wyr solchs wol verdienet haben . . . ." Ibid., p. 359.

[152] "An den christlichen Adel," WA, VI, 409. In his "Ermahnung zum Frieden," however, he had to admonish the princes. ". . . Ich hett wol ander artickel widder euch zu stellen, die gemeyn Deutsch land vnd regiment betreffen, wie ich than habe ym buch an den deutschen adel, da wol mehr angelegen were, Aber weyl yhr die habt ynn den wind geschlagen, müst ihr nü solche eygen nutzige artickel horen vnd leyden, Und geschicht euch eben recht als denen nicht zu sagen ist." WA, XVIII, 298.

[153] "Weyl nü lieben herrn, auff beyden seytten nichts christlichs ist, auch keyne Christlich sache zwischen euch schwebt, sondern beyde herrn vnd bawrschaft, vmb heydnisch odder welltlich recht vnd vnrecht vnd vmb yeztlich gut zu thun habt, Dazu auff beyden seytten widder got handelt vnd vnter seynem zorn stehet . . . ." Ibid., p. 329.

Between his "Ermahnung zum Frieden" and his notorious "Wider die räuberischen . . . Bauern," Luther had heard about the peasant excesses at Weinsberg and other regions. He had personally tried to stem the tide of revolt in his own back yard and had been rebuffed. He had observed how the Mordpropheten had 'duped' the peasants into demanding social equality on the basis of Christian principles, especially in Thuringia. Not only, therefore, had the peasants not given up their claim to social justice on Christian principles, under cover of these very Christian principles they had also robbed, plundered, and devastated the property of others and had indulged in wanton slayings. In so doing they had not only sacrificed their just position in the temporal realm with regard to their demands, for Luther strongly believed that it was the duty of heathen and Christian magistrate alike to suppress revolution,[154] but they had also, and this was of much graver concern to Luther, proven themselves to be worse than heathens since they had misused God's Word to cover their selfish desires.[155]

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[154] See Luther's "Eine treue Vermahnung," WA, VIII, 679, as well as "Ermahnung zum Frieden," WA, XVIII, 303 and 306. Revolution by the masses was perhaps the worst thing that could happen in the temporal realm as far as Luther was concerned. A reading of his Bauernschriften certainly leaves this as one of the indelible impressions. See also Paul Althaus, Luthers Haltung im Bauernkrieg (Basel, 1953), p. 24.

If Luther's attitude toward the peasant movement was a consistent one,[156] as even Bensing has admitted, how did the revolutionary-turned-reactionary image arise upon which the Marxists have built their image of a metamorphic class-conscious Luther? It has already been pointed out that this view originated in Zimmermann's peasant perspective and his political orientation. But there is another reason for this view. The 'revolutionary-reactionary' frame of reference is based on the assumption that Luther's 'revolution' was on a level with the social movements of the knights or the peasants. For this reason the Marxists can speak about 'drawing the objective consequences from Luther's attack against the Church.' If the two 'revolutions' are not on the same level, however, then the frame of reference loses much, if not all, of its validity.[157]

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[155] The above discourse may well explain Luther's stand in the Peasants' War, it in no way justifies the extremes in his last pamphlet, however. Indeed, one should find very few historians or theologians who would condone them. See, e.g., Lau's criticism, Luthers Lehre von den beiden Reichen, p. 47, n. 110: ". . . Es ist meines Erachtens ganz zwecklos, sie zu verteidigen. Ganz unabhängig davon, ob luther hinsichtlich der obrigkeitlichen Pflichten der damaligen Stunde recht hatte oder nicht—als Prediger des Evangeliums hätte er so nicht reden dürfen." Paul Althaus, Luthers Haltung, pp. 36-54, however, attempted just such a justification.

[156] Joseph Lortz, Die Reformation in Deutschland, vol. I, 3rd ed. (Freiburg/B, 1949), pp. 332-33, has remarked of Luther's last pamphlet and his attitude: "Eine furchtbar harte Sprache! Aber gefühlmässig wie grundsätzlich nichts anderes als eine konsequente Durchführung jener ersten Thesen. Und wie man auch Luthers Ansichten beurteilen mag, man wird nicht sagen können, dass er um des propogandistischen Vorteils wegen auch nur in der Form von seiner Strenge abgegangen sei . . . ."

As has been pointed out, Luther was concerned about a spiritual renewal, therefore his 'revolution' was primarily on the spiritual level. But the ecclesiastical forces of his day had become so hedged about with temporal powers and so ensconced in the world as feudal landlords that Luther's spiritual 'revolution' could very easily cause a social upheaval. One need only mention the problem of the secularization of church property to become fully aware of this possibility. Yet, as far as Luther was concerned, these were only consequences in the temporal realm of his spiritual 'revolution.' Despite his intemperate and often abusive language against the Church of his day, and his incitement to established government to take the initiative in the spiritual 'revolution' should the ecclesiastical powers fail to do so, Luther clung to the belief that God's Word would accomplish the task of itself and physical force would be unnecessary.[158] Therefore, as he himself said, he was no revolutionary in the political sense of the term. As a matter of fact, when social revolution did come, he turned against it as no one else did. In the spiritual realm, however, he most certainly was a revolutionary, but not everyone was able to keep the two kingdoms as neatly divided as he was.

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[157] Lau, "Luther—Reaktionär oder Revolutionär?" pp. 109-12, has shown that the term, 'revolutionary,' used in its conventional connotation, does not really apply to Luther.

The peasants, who were concerned primarily with the temporal realm most assuredly did not understand Luther's theory of the two kingdoms, nor did they care to separate the one from the other. They were primarily concerned about the application of the new theology to their present needs.[159] And Luther's accusation that they were misusing God's Word to justify selfish ends certainly had its kernel of truth. Yet, seen from the peasant perspective which, like Zimmermann and Engels, did not really understand Luther's 'other-wrldly' reasoning,[160] the latter's 'revolution' must have appeared very similar to the one they envisaged. Were they not both for the secularization of Church lands, but for different reasons? Did they not both want to see the Church removed from its ties with things all too temporal? Did they not both call down God's judgment upon ecclesiastical and secular lord alike? Yet from their point of view Luther justified his own 'revolution' but condemned theirs.

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[158] This must be seen in the context used above, that Luther believed the princes to be entitled to 'free' the Church of its worldly ties, for the Church had usurped them in the first place. The real, inner Reformation within the hearts of men would have to be wrought by God.

[159] Lortz, Die Reformation in Deutschland, pp. 159-75, while criticising Catholic scholars for their all encompassing condemnation of Reformation motivation, is certainly justified in making the claim that the motives were not all that pure.

Luther did more, however. In his role as spiritual scourge in an age all too godless, Luther moved about the social classes with virile words of condemnation. Thus, for example, in his "Ermahnung zum Frieden," he told the princes: "For of this one thing be assured dear lords, God can so ordain matters that people cannot, nor will, nor shall tolerate your tyranny in the long run. You must change and give God's Word the right of way. If you do not do this willingly, then you will be forced to do it under duress. If the peasants will not do it, others will. Even were you to kill all of them, yet they remain undefeated, for God will awaken others against you because He wants to punish you and will do so. Not the peasants have pitted themselves against you, my lords, God Himself has done so in order to judge your tyranny . . . ."[161] But the pamphlet was directed against both princes and peasants. Any peasant reading this passage could not have found a better justification for his revolt, for Luther had called it the judgment of God on the princes. Yet to the peasants he counselled reasonable compromise, if not outright Christian submission. Luther's dialectic must most assuredly have passed well over the heads of his peasant readers.

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[160] "Aber die Gegenfrage! Gewiss, die Bauern beriefen sich zu Unrecht auf Luther. Die Rechtfertigung ihrer Forderung aus der reformatorischen Lehre sind die erste weltgeschichtliche Fehldeutung der Ansichten Luthers . . . ." Ibid., p. 333.

If Luther viewed the religious and social problems of his day through the eyes of his theory of the two kingdoms, the peasants viewed them from the point of view of the *Corpus Christianum*.[162] In this *Corpus Christianum* everyone was Christian, although this Christianity needed reforming, and therefore Christian equality should apply in the Christian society. The artificial social and ecclesiastical hierarchy which had been established did not really have a 'Christian' basis, although the established Church sought to justify it.[163] Therefore, the peasant demand that 'divine law' be made to apply in this Christian society certainly had its justification.[164] As Hans von Schubert pointed out some time ago, the Reformatio Sigismundi probably manifested the popular sentiments as fully as any other document, and ". . . even here where the spiritual realm was kept strictly separate from the secular realm, one did not exclude religion from its appliciability to social questions, but the connection remained very unclear . . . ."[165] Therefore the misunderstanding must not all be laid at the peasant door. Certainly they misunderstood Luther, but Luther also misunderstood their motives because he viewed their actions from his theory of the two kingdoms. Whereas all men were Christian in the Corpus Christianum, though in need of reform, Luther told the peasants: ". . . it is impossible that all are true Christians and men of good will in such a mob . . . ."[166] A further cause for

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[161] WA, XVIII, 294-95.

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[162] This was obviously more unconsciously than consciously expressed. In the *Reformatio Sigismundi*, for example, although the author begins with the lament that,

> Gehorsamkeyt ist tod,
> gerechtigkeyt leyt not,
> nichts steht in rechter ordenung,

Heinrich Koller, hrsg., *Reformation Kaiser Siegmunds* (Stuttgart, 1964), p. 50, he proceeds to speak in terms of ". . . jung und alt, alle gemein cristenheyt, nyemant ausgenomen . . . ," p. 78; or again when the author recorded the following tale: "Es ist war: kurtzlich pey unnserem herren des keyser zeytten im comcilio zü Basel disputiert ein cristen ritter mit dem hertzog von Durchen und sprach der ritter zu dem hertzogen: 'Herr, yr seyt ein weyssherr herr, yr sollent euch lassen tauffen und cristen werden . . . ,'" p. 86. But precisely this 'gemein cristenheyt,' this *Corpus Christianum*, needed to be reformed in head and members: "Almechtiger got, schöpffer himels und ertrichs, gib krofft und thü genad, gib weyssheyt zü einem erkennen und zü vollbringen nach dem allerseligistenn statten und ein ordennung zu haben geystlichs und weltlichs stats, in der dein heyliger name und gotheyt bekennet werde; wan dein zorn ist offen, dein ungenade hat unns begriffen; wir geen als dye schoff on hirten, wir gen an dye weyde an urlaub," p. 50.

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[163] In this respect, though, both the Reformatio Sigismundi and the Twelve Articles were quite conservative. They did not as yet draw these logical conclusions. Radicals like Thomas Müntzer, however, did.

[164] The peasants did draw some of these conclusions, as in the third of the Twelve Articles. "Zum dritten ist der Brauch bisher gewesen, das man uns für ir eigen Leüt gehalten haben, wölchs zů erbarmen ist angesehen das uns Christus all mit seinem kostparlichen Plůtvergüssen erlösst und erkauft hat, den Hirten gleich als wol als den Höchsten, kein ausgenommen. Darumb erfindt sich mit der Geschrift, das wir frei seien und wöllen sein. Nit das wir gar frei wöllen sein, kain Oberkait haben wellen, lernet uns Gott nit. Wir sollen in Gepotten leben, nit in freiem fleischlichen Můtwillen; sondern Got lieben, in als unsern Herren in unsern Nechsten erkennen und alles das ton, so wir auch gern hetten, das uns Got am Nachtmal gepotten hat zů ainer letz . . . ." Günther Franz, Quellen zur Geschichte des Bauernkrieges (München, 1963), p. 176.

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[165] Hans von Schubert, Revolution und Reformation im XVI Jahrhundert (Tübingen, 1927), p. 11. Günther Franz has pointed to other roots of these ideas as well. "Aber nicht nur Eigennutz, auch ehrliche Überzeugung konnte dazu führen, das Evangelium 'fleischlich' aufzufassen und in der Bibel die Rechtsgrundlage für das irdische Leben zu suchen. Kein Geringerer als Eerasmus von Rotterdam hat die verpflichtende Kraft des Evangeliums für alle irdischen Verhältnisse immer erneut eingeschärft und in seiner Institutio principis Christiani, die 1521 von dem Wittenberger Georg Spalatin wie dem Züricher Leo Jud gleichzeitig ins Deutsche übertragen wurde, die Bibel als das Richtsscheid zu erweisen gesucht, dass 'jeder fromme Christ sein Leben ganz danach richte und ausreute, verachte und verwerfe alles, was diesem wider ist.'" Bauernkrieg, p. 90.

[166] "Ermahnung zum Frieden," WA, XVIII, 292.

misunderstanding on Luther's part was his belief that the whole peasant movement had been instigated by the Mordpropheten, particularly by Thomas Müntzer.[167]

If, therefore, it is true that Luther gave the peasants cause to misunderstand him, and that a further cause for misunderstanding lay in the very nature of the peasant perspective, one is justified in asking whether or not the Marxists are correct in stating that Luther's stand in the Peasant War ended the spontaneous progress of the Reformation and changed it into a Furstenreformation. As Franz Lau has pointed out, the statement is undoubtedly too one-sided in its Marxist formulation.[168] That there is some truth in it, however, no one would care to deny.[169] But Lau has pointed to the cities in Northern Germany most of which accepted the Lutheran faith after the Peasant War as well as to the fact that the tendency toward absolutism was responsible for the growth of the Obrigkeitskirche.[170]

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[167] ". . . das disse auffrühr nicht kan aus mir komen, sondern die mordpropheten, wilche myr ia so feynd sind als euch, sind vnter disen pofel komen, Da mit sie nū lenger denn drey iar vmb sich gangen vnd niemant so fast gewe̦ret vnd widderstanden, als ich alleyne . . . ." Ibid., p. 296.

[168] Franz Lau, "Der Bauernkrieg und das angebliche Ende der . . . Reformation . . . ," p. 111. Lau pointed out that this thesis is not unique to the Marxists, but finds its most radical formulation there. "Es soll hier ein geschichtlicher Sachverhalt dargelegt und entfaltet werden, die das skizzierte Geschichtsbild, das im Grunde genommen das geläufige Geschichtsbild ist (die marxistische Geschichtsschreibung hat alle Behauptungen nur überspitzt und in den Dienst der Glorifizierung der sog. Volksreformation Thomas Müntzer gestellt) . . . ," p. 112.

But what about the 'bourgeois' Luther which the Marxists attempted to create, despite the latter's vacillating and at times reactionary class conduct? Luther simply does not fit into the role assigned him. The Marxists obviously realize this for they try to explain away those aspects of Luther's conduct which do not fit his 'bourgeois' role, or they make him the exponent of another class. Rather than give up an unsuitable category, however, the Marxists prefer to make that category meaningless. It is quite true, of course, that Luther's aim to reform the Church, and especially his desire to free it from its all too tangible involvement in the mundane affairs of the world, should play into the hands of the peasants and the princes as well. Luther, however, viewed the established order, be this the princes, emperor, or the city magistrates in the free cities, as God-given and therefore also to be obeyed. The peasants, in order to realize those aspects of Luther's teachings which suited their purpose, had eventually to turn against this established order. That was where Luther parted company with them. The cities and the princes, however, were a part of the established order and hence could, according to Luther, initiate reforms on their own. Luther, therefore, did not have to part company with them. Hence he could be viewed as a 'bourgeois' reformer or as a 'princely hireling,' but only if one viewed him, as the Marxists have, from the point of view of the bourgeoisie or the princes, not from Luther's own point of view. Viewed from this vantage point one comes to an altogether different conclusion.[171] But this vantage point is closed to the Marxists because of an ideological barrier.

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[169] Hermann Mühlpfort, Bürgermeister in Zwickau, to Stephan Roth of June 4, 1525: ". . . Doctor Martinus ist pei dem gemeinen Volk und auch pei Gelarten und Ungelarten in grossen Abfall, achten sein Schreiben von sehr unbestendik . . . ." Franz, Quellen, p. 583.

[170] Lau, "Der Bauernkrieg und das angebliche Ende der . . . Reformation . . . ," pp. 112-34. Even the Marxists have taken cognizance of Lau's article, for in his Das Täuferreich zu Münster 1534/35 (Berlin, 1966), Gerhard Brendler remarked in 'dependence' upon Lau: "Ein zweites wesentliches Moment, das den 1525 erfochtenen Sieg der Feudalherren unvollständig erscheinen lässt, ist die Tatsache, dass noch ein gutes Jahrzehnt lang eine von den Fürsten unabhängige stadtbürgerliche Bewegung neue Erfolge für die Reformation erzielte und das 'Evangelium' in neue Gebiete hineintrug vor allem in die vom Bauernkrieg night erfassten . . . ," p. 74. See also Karl Kupisch, "Protestantismus und sozialrevolution," Vom Pietismus zum Kommunismus, pp. 74-106.

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[171] See M. Greschat, "Luthers Haltung im Bauernkrieg," ARG, 56 (1965), 1, 31-47. ". . . Von da aus gesehen [the nature of God's Word for Luther] ist Luthers Haltung im Jahre 1525 nicht die eines reaktionären Wortführers landesfürstlichen Obrigkeitsdenkens, aber auch nicht einfach die Haltung eines konservativen Bewahrers göttlicher Schöpfungsordnungen in aufgewühlter Zeit: treffender vielmehr und richtiger, meine ich, lässt sich diese Haltung Luthers im deutschen Bauernkrieg als die eines christlichen Apokalptikers kennzeichnen," p. 32.

CHAPTER VIII

THOMAS MÜNTZER: CHRISTIAN OR SOCIAL REVOLUTIONARY*

A. The Social Revolutionary

Zimmermann's glorification of Thomas Müntzer and his revolutionary reinterpretation of the latter's role in the Peasant War was, to a certain degree, an expression of the revolutionary tenor of the times, for he had been anticipated in this interpretation by revolutionary spirits before him and was acclaimed by others after him. Thus Heinrich Heine, writing in his "Französische Zustande," 1831, quoted a lengthy passage from Müntzer's "Schutzrede" and praised the latter's attempt to establish more equitable relations among men here on earth by means of revolution. He went on to point to the fact that Luther's teachings had come to be used to support princely absolutism, and he concluded with a judgment similar to that of other revolutionary spirits that Luther had been wrong and Müntzer right. However, Heine was still very much aware that Müntzer's demands for equality and justice during the time of the Reformation had found their source in the Bible, or at least in religion.[1] His position, therefore, was not yet that of Zimmermann.

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*This chapter is essentially an extension and revision of my article, "Thomas Müntzer in Marxist Thought," which appeared in Church History, XXXIV (1965), 306-27.

With his interpretation of Müntzer as a social revolutionary, however, Zimmermann had paved the way better for a Marxist interpretation of Müntzer than he realized at the time. But the similarity between his picture of Müntzer and the communists of 1848 must have impressed itself upon even him during the 1848 rebellions, for in the second edition of his Bauernkrieg he remarked: ". . . Müntzer and his followers were very much like the present communists and socialists with their easily inflamed imagination and lack of accomplishment . . . ."[2] If Zimmermann recognized the similarity between his description of Müntzer and the communists and socialists of his own time, it is not surprising that the Marxists, who were constantly on the alert for their communist precursors, should have recognized the similarity immediately.

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[1] Heinrich Heine, "Französische Zustände," Werke und Briefe, vol. 4 (Berlin, 1960), 514-16.

[2] Zimmermann, Bauernkrieg (1856), II, 350. It would be of interest to know whether Zimmermann was ever aware of the fact that Engels had used his book for his Marxist reinterpretation of the Peasant War, and if he knew, what he thought of it. It does not seem unlikely that he should have become aware of it, Hausherr and Barge to the contrary notwithstanding, for even if he did not see or hear of the first edition in the Neue Rheinische Zeitung of 1850, he could very easily have seen a second or third edition in book form, for these appeared in 1870 and 1875, respectively. In the preface to the 1870 edition Engels openly acknowledged his factual dependence upon Zimmermann's study. Since Zimmermann lived until 1878, he could either have seen the book personally or else have heard about it from a friend. I was unable, however, to find any definite indication which might have verified the above conjecture, or locate Zimmermann's letters and papers which, in 1939, were still in the possession of the family.

In November of 1843, however, Engels did not yet know to what extent Müntzer had been a proto-communist,[3] for in a short essay he still stated that, ". . . The preacher, Thomas Müntzer, whom they [the peasants] had placed at their head, issued a call, which was naturally still full of the religious and superstitious nonsense of his time, but which, among other things, contained the following principles: according to the Bible no Christian had the right to private property; community ownership of property was the only appropriate form of ownership for Christians . . . . These teachings were nothing less than logical conclusions drawn from the Bible and Luther's writings . . . [my italics]."[4] Engels who had just turned communist himself,[5] realized that Müntzer had demanded a communistic society, that he had believed such a society would cure society's social ills, but Engels also still realized that Müntzer had been religiously motivated to make these demands. Obviously, Engels had not yet discovered that Müntzer had really been a rationalist.

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[3] Apparently Engels had not yet read Zimmermann's Bauernkrieg where he was to meet a rationally motivated Müntzer. On the other hand, however, it is also possible that he had not yet fully comprehended the Marxist theory of ideological superstructure. This latter is the more unlikely because already in 1844 he co-authored "Die deutsche Ideologie" with Marx in which the theory was expounded. Whatever the reason, Zimmermann's portrayal of Müntzer must have been a welcome revelation to him.

[4] Engels, "Fortschritte der Sozialreform auf dem Kontinent," M/E, Werke, I, 489.

Even a year or so later Engels still spoke of Müntzer in the following terms: ". . . Thomas Münzer, the famous leader of the Peasant War of 1525 . . . was a real democrat as far as it was possible at that time . . . ."[6] But when he came to write his Bauernkrieg in 1850, he was able to omit the conditional clause at the end of this sentence and, on the basis of the latest historical research, assert that Müntzer had been the ". . . famous leader of the Peasant War of 1525 who was a real democrat and fought for real demands, not illusions . . . ,"[7] for meanwhile he had discovered from Zimmermann that Müntzer had not been motivated by religious ardor but that he had cleverly used religion to promote his political aspirations.

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[5] See above, p. 18, n. 26.

[6] Engels, "Deutsche Zustände II," M/E, Werke, II, 577.

[7] Engels, "Bauernkrieg," M/E, Werke, VII, 346.

As has been noted, Engels now went so far as to assert that religion had played no part in the struggle at all. The supremacy of theology in the realm of the intellectual had been a logical consequence of the position of the Church as the most general force coördinating and sanctioning the existing feudal domination. Under such circumstances it was obvious that all overt attacks on feudalism had been first of all attacks on the Church; all revolutionary, social, and political doctrines, therefore, necessarily became theological heresies.

From this conclusion it was but a short step to stating that both Müntzer and the whole peasant movement had been motivated by economic or material forces. Since Engels had begun the study of the whole problem of the Peasant War with the avowed purpose of showing that ". . . beneath the outward forms of political events there lay the economic forces which are the beating heart of history . . . ,"[8] the above conclusion was predetermined. The material conditions from which this ideology arose are then depicted, and it is shown that there were two distinct demands for reform. The rising middle class simply demanded a 'cheap church' whereas the peasants and the plebians were much more radical, demanding a complete

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[8] Gustav Mayer, Friedrich Engels (New York, 1936), p. 122.

reorganization of society along egalitarian lines.[9] Since the plebian opposition and large sections of the peasants were without property, these segments of society had nothing to lose by becoming radical and as a result began to question the institutions of their society. Thus, claimed Engels, who was trying to shame the proletariat of his own day into radical measures by demanding a more egalitarian social order these people had anticipated the future course of historical events.[10]

This anticipation of the coming stages of historical development was first to be noted in Thomas Müntzer and his party.[11] Although the historical dialectic had not yet progressed to the stage where the egalitarian society could be established, the very fact that Müntzer had tried to realize it made him a great revolutionary hero.

But what then were Müntzer's real ideas if his theology was a mere screen? These Engels now found in Zimmermann, but he also went a little beyond Zimmermann. He found the real Müntzer ". . . under the cloak of Christian forms . . . ."[12] At heart Müntzer had been an atheist who had at times preached a kind of pantheism which

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[9] Engels, "Bauernkrieg," pp. 353-54.

[10] As we noted in the chapter on Zimmermann, this aspect of Müntzer's thought was especially emphasized.

[11] Engels, "Bauernkrieg," p. 346.

[12] *Ibid*., p. 353.

". . . curiously resemble[d] the modern speculative mode of contemplation . . . ."[13] He had been a rationalist who had claimed that faith was nothing but reason come alive in man.[14] Heaven and hell were non-existent and Christ had been but an ordinary man such as you and I.[15] He had wanted to establish the Kingdom of God on earth, but this for Müntzer had been nothing less ". . . than a state of society without class diferences, without private property, and without superimposed state powers opposed to the members of society."[16]

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[13] Ibid. Zimmermann had not stated that Müntzer had been an atheist, but had portrayed him more as a rational Deist.

[14] In Heinrich Leo's essay, Thomas Münzer (Berlin, 1856), Müntzer was once again pictured as a Spiritualist on the basis of Seidemann's biography of 1842. Leo made Müntzer responsible for the Peasant War, but he in no way portrayed him as the rational revolutionary. In a letter to Engels of March 5, 1856, Marx commented: "Father Leo has given a lecture on Münzer before the king (partially reprinted in the 'Neuen Preussischen Zeitung') . . . Münzer was a Spiritualist who said: 'intelligo ut credam . . . .'" M/E, Werke, XXIX, 24-25.

[15] Engels, "Bauernkrieg," M/E, Werke, VII, 353.

[16] Ibid.

Müntzer had not only been the ideological harbinger of modern communism, however, he had also been the revolutionary par excellence. He had been the real leader of the Peasant War, guiding and directing the various sections of it by means of a vast conspiracy. His agitators had been Anabaptists, recruited largely from the journeyman class in the towns, who travelled from place to place.[17] The center of this great conspiratorial movement had been in Mühlhausen where Müntzer had had his headquarters and had presided over his underground cell.[18] Among his disciples he had numbered such men as Balthasar Hubmaier of Waldshut, Conrad Grebel of Zurich, Franz Rabmann of Griessen, and Schappelar of Memmingen, to name some of the more important ones.[19] This, of course, was no mean accomplishment at a time when transportation had been poor, particularism rampant among the peasants, and Müntzer and his followers beset by enemies on every side.[20]

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[17] Ibid., pp. 355-56.

[18] Ibid., p. 400.

[19] Ibid., pp. 357-58.

[20] Engels himself admitted that the Peasant War had failed because of what he called "Lokalborniertheit." Ibid., p. 412.

But not even this had been Müntzer's greatest achievement in the eyes of Engels. When Ferdinand Lassalle wrote his drama, Franz von Sickingen, in 1859, glorifying the rebel Sickingen merely because he had been a revolutionary, Marx and Engels took issue with him. They pointed out to him that revolution in and of itself had no merit; this was particularly so since Sickingen, the revolutionary, had been trying to restore the position of the knights of the realm. There was nothing really tragic about Sickingen's plight. As Marx put it, ". . . He went under because he revolted as a knight and as a representative of a decaying class against the existing order, or, better still, against the new form of the existing order . . . ."[21] Müntzer, on the other hand, had been the leader of a new movement, one that would one day be victorious, but as yet could only fail.[22] Thus, besides being the proto-communist, Müntzer also became a tragic hero caught in the grips of Marxist logic. The time for the communist revolt had not yet come, for the bourgeois revolution was just beginning. Müntzer, therefore, had been far in advance of his time with his ideas, and because the historical situation had as yet been unripe for these ideas he had had to fail.[23] But his greatness lay in the fact that he had seen the ultimate goal to which history was inexorably moving and had tried to guide society in that direction. His failure did not in the least detract from his greatness; his defeat, in fact, had been inevitable.[24]

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[21] Quoted in Georg Lukacz, Karl Marx und Friedrich Engels als Literaturkritiker (Berlin, 1952), p. 19.

[22] Ibid., p. 23.

The view of August Bebel was essentially the same.[25] However, there was one difference. Where Engels had seen the failure of the revolution in the fact that history had not been ripe for Müntzer's communistic revolution, Bebel saw the cause of failure in the inability of the common man to become a revolutionary. Except for the French Revolution, Bebel was convinced that the Volk could not be brought to a revolutionary state of mind.[26]

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[23] The 'telescoping of the revolution' has caused quite a problem in Marxist thought especially since many revolutionaries could not wait until the historical dialectic had fulfilled the rigid demands of Marxist logic. The classic example of a revolution which was 'telescoped' was, of course, the Russian Revolution of 1917. See George Lichtheim, Marxism, an Historical and Critical Study (New York, 1960), p. 16.

[24] Lassalle made a lengthy reply on May 27, 1859, in which he pointed out that the objections of Marx and Engels could be reduced to the following: "Eure Einwürfe reduzieren sich in letzter Analyse darauf, dass ich überhaupt einen 'Franz von Sickingen' und nicht einen Thomas Münzer oder eine andere Bauernkriegstragödie geschrieben habe." Then he went on to demonstrate that the Peasant War of 1525 had been just as reactionary, if not more so, than the revolt led by Sickingen. See Franz Mehring, Nachlass, vol. iv (Stuttgart, 1902), 153-83.

[25] Bebel must have written Engels that he was studying while in Zwickau jail for lese majesty, for on June 20, 1873, Engels wrote him saying: "Dass Sie Ihre Gefangenschaft stoisch aushalten und studieren, ist sehr schön . . . ." Briefwechsel mit Engels, p. 23.

The last days of Müntzer caused Bebel some concern. Engels had avoided discussing the problem by asserting that Müntzer had died courageously as any hero ought to die. Either Bebel was more honest or else he was more aware of Müntzer's alleged confession, for he admitted that in his letter to the Mühlhausen council Müntzer had begged his friends to stop the useless struggle.[27] He did not, however, draw the obvious conclusion that this action had not befitted a true revolutionary. Bebel complained that even in his last hour Müntzer's enemies had tried to convince him of his errors; he concluded, however, that ". . . Münzer remained steadfast and quietly submitted to the execution . . . ."[28] Thus he denied that Müntzer had repented and, as Philip of Hesse had claimed, had died a penitent Christian.[29] This would have demolished the hero image he had drawn of Müntzer.

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[26] "In einem konsequenten energischen Auftreten gegen seine Feinde hat sich das Volk, die grosse französische Revolution ausgenommen, noch kaum in einer Revolution aufgerafft; auch ist, was von der Grausamkeit und Rachesucht des Volkscharakters gesagt wird, Lüge und Verleumdung . . . ." August Bebel, Der Deutsche Bauernkrieg (Braunschweig, 1876), p. 138. Apparently Bebel was not aware of the revolutionary nature of the proletariat; but then Engels had to say of Bebel's theoretical knowledge: "If Bebel had only a smattering of theoretical education such a thing could not happen. He seems to be a quite efficient chap who has however this one handicap . . . ." Engels to Kugelmann, July 10, 1869. Correspondence, p. 267.

[27] Bebel, Bauernkrieg, p. 190.

It is doubtful whether Engels or Bebel had read any of Müntzer's writings at all when they prepared their interpretations of the latter's role in the Peasant War;[30] with Kautsky it was a different matter. Kautsky first turned his attention to Müntzer in 1889 when he wrote a series of articles on the role of the miners in the Peasant War. In one of these articles[31] he attempted to trace

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[28] Ibid., p. 191.

[29] Gordon Rupp, "Luther and Thomas Müntzer," Luther Today, I (Iowa, 1957), p. 145.

[30] Engels stated explicitly that ". . . All the material relating to the peasants revolts and to Thomas Münzer has been taken from Zimmermann . . . ." "Bauernkrieg," M/E, Werke, VII, 531. Similarly, Bebel stated that ". . . Die vorliegende Schrift macht keine Ansprüche auf Quellenstudien, dazu fehlten mir schon an dem Ort, wo sie entstand, die Mittel . . . ." Bauernkrieg, p. iii.

[31] Kautsky, "Thomas Münzer und die Bergarbeiter," Die Neue Zeit, 7 (1889), 443-53.

Müntzer's influence on the miners in Thuringia. He was convinced that the latter's influence had been great, yet in the decisive moments none of the miners had followed Müntzer into battle.[32]

Although Kautsky noted in a footnote that Seidemann's book on Müntzer was the best for facts and chronology concerning the latter's life,[33] yet his interpretation was that of Zimmermann. In a letter to Engels of 1892 he wrote:

> . . . As you may well remember, I worked through all the Münzer writings some time ago as well as the writings of Luther and Melanchthon in so far as they relate to the Peasant War, then all the Münzer literature I could find in the British Museum. I gave up my projected study of Münzer since I found that I could say nothing new about him. Zimmermann has hit the nail on the head in all essential points and I could only have added to his portrayal in little things as far as the events are concerned.[34]

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[32] He tried to explain this fact in the following way: ". . . Im Laufe der Bewegung hört man nichts mehr von den Bergarbeitern, es ist nur noch von den Bauern die Rede. Dies ist wohl nicht einem wirklichen Zurücktreten der ersteren, sondern der kurzen und ungenauen Ausdrucksweise des Berichterstatters zuzuschreiben, der, wie die Schriftsteller über den Bauernkrieg in der Regel, die Aufständischen einfach als Bauern bezeichnet, aus welchen Klassen immer sie rekrutiert sein mochten . . . ." Ibid., p. 453.

[33] "J.K. Seidemann, Thomas Münzer. Das, was Material und Chronologie anbelangt, beste Buch über Müntzer . . . ." Ibid., p. 451. Thus already Kautsky recognized that insofar as the facts about Müntzer were concerned, Seidemann's Müntzer biography had superseded Zimmermann's.

[34] Kautsky to Engels, February 19, 1892. E/K, Briefwechsel, p. 329. It does not speak well for Kautsky's critical insight if he accepted Zimmermann's interpretation after having read everything concerning Müntzer.

Two years later Kautsky was studying Müntzer's writings again, this time in preparation for his Vorläufer des neueren Sozialismus.[35] Despite the fact, however, that Kautsky asserted Zimmermann had 'hit the nail on the head in all essential points,' he proceeded to make substantial revisions in both Zimmermann's and Engels' Müntzer image.

In his book Kautsky was not at all convinced that Müntzer had been so far ahead of his times in his thinking. As a matter of fact, he asserted that he could find ". . . no new ideas in him . . . ."[36] Not only had there been nothing new in his ideas, but Müntzer had also been vastly overrated as a revolutionary.[37] Nor was the communism of Müntzer something new. But Müntzer had been outstanding nevertheless; he had surpassed his contemporaries not only in ". . . philosophic conceptions and in talent for organizing, but in his revolutionary energy, and especially in his statesmanlike discernment . . . ."[38] The Medieval communists had been peaceful as were most of Müntzer's communist contemporaries—even the Swiss Anabaptists! Thus Müntzer's true greatness had consisted of his revolutionary ardor and the breadth of his vision: ". . . he appealed to all the revolutionary elements of his time, and sought to make them serve his purpose . . . ."[39]

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[35] "Ich sitze in Hirsau, mit Münzer beschäftigt, und gedenke noch 3-4 Wochen hier zu bleiben . . . ." Kautsky to Engels, July 23, 1894. E/K, Briefwechsel, p. 406.

[36] Karl Kautsky, Vorläufer des neueren Sozialismus, vol. II (Stuttgart, 1895), p. 42. Of Zimmermann's study he stated: "Erscheint uns die Auffassung Zimmermanns im allgemeinen wohl begründet, so können wir ihm doch in einem sehr wesentlichen Punkte nicht zustimmen: er fasst Münzer auf als ausserhalb seiner Zeit und über ihr stehend . . . ."

[37] Ibid.

[38] Ibid.

Although Kautsky maintained that Müntzer's failure had been inevitable, he admitted that Müntzer had been, ". . . as a rule, unsuccessful in his efforts to bring about a coöperation of the revolutionary movements in the various districts of Saxony . . . ."[40] He ran into a real problem, however, when he tried to reconcile his picture of Müntzer with the latter's confession and ostensible recantation. In the letter to Mühlhausen, mentioned previously, Müntzer had exhorted his friends not to exasperate the higher authorities because his death was deserved and was well calculated to open the eyes of the foolish.[41] Unlike Bebel, who simply disregarded the latter part of this letter, and Zimmermann, who had attempted to put a more favorable construction on it, Kautsky admitted that the letter did betray 'faint-heartedness.'[42]

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[39] Ibid.

[40] Ibid., p. 43.

[41] Ibid., p. 101.

[42] Ibid., p. 102.

But all was not lost! By impugning the genuiness of the letter, Kautsky arrived at the conclusion that the letter had been a forgery of the princes calculated to ". . . produce despondency among the besieged . . . ."[43] Since it has not been in Müntzer's own hand, Kautsky felt this to be a justifiable conclusion. But no matter what the actual facts of the case, ". . . in the eyes of the German working-classes Münzer was and is the most brilliant embodiment of heretical communism."[44]

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[43] Ibid.

[44] Ibid., p. 103. Kautsky wrote to Engels again on March 5, 1895: "Schwer wars, in Bezug auf Muenzer zu wesentlich neuen Gesichtspunkten zu kommen. Das entscheidende Material hat Zimmermann bereits beigebracht—gerade ueber die Muenzersche Bewegung sind alle bedeutenden Monographien vor Zimmermann erschienen und von ihm benutzt worden. Und die materialistische Beleuchtung hast Du bereits gegeben. Da war fuer mich nicht viel zu machen." E/K, Briefwechsel, p. 423. Nevertheless Kautsky had, through his broader study of late medieval heretical movements, noted nothing new in Müntzer in contrast to Zimmermann. And Engels had the following words of praise for this part of Kautsky's book: "Von Deinem Buch kann ich sagen dass es sich bessert je weiter man darin kommt. Plato und das Urchristentum sind noch zu ungeneugend nach dem urspruenglichen Plan behandelt. Die mittelalterlichen Sekten schon viel besser und zwar cresendo. Am besten die Taboriten, Muenzer, die Wiedertäufer . . . ." Ibid., pp. 434-35. In the 1908 edition of Engels' Bauernkrieg, Franz Mehring, the editor, commented on this aspect as follows: "Wichtiger ist der Widerspruch, den Kautsky dagegen erheht, dass Zimmermann in Münzer einen ausserhalb seiner Zeit und über ihr stehenden Denker erblickt. Zimmermann, dessen Darstellung Kautsky sonst übrigens in vollem Masse anerkennt, komme zu dieser Auffassung, indem er Münzer mit späteren Denkern wie Penn, Zinsendorf, Rousseau u.a. vergleiche. Hätte er ihn dagegen mit früheren kommunistischen Sekten verglichen, so würde er gefunden haben, dass Münzer sich ganz in deren Gedankenkriese bewegt habe. Kautsky gesteht, keine neuen Gedanken bei Münzer gefunden zu haben, und meint auch dass Münzers organisatorische und propogandistische Bedeutung überschätzt worden sei . . . Hiernach wäre denn auch zu berichtigen oder einzuschränken, was Engels über . . . Münzer sagt," p. 123.

E. Belfort Bax, writing some four years after Kautsky in his The Peasant War in Germany, went on to modify Zimmermann's and Engels' picture of Müntzer even more.[45] In spite of the fact that he praised Zimmermann's sympathetic treatment of the Peasant War,[46] Bax proceeded to attack two basic theories of Zimmermann: the theory of Müntzer's influence in the Peasant War in the southern part of Germany,[47] and the theory of Muntzer as the social revolutionary.[48]

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[45] Bax did not even mention Engels' book on the Peasant War in his bibliography.

[46] ". . . Of all the works on the Peasant War, that of Zimmermann still holds the first place, alike for comprehensiveness of view and accuracy. Many details, it is true, have been corrected and expanded by later research, but for sympathetic understanding of the movement, combined with historical insight, Zimmermann has yet hardly been equalled and certainly not surpassed." Bax, The Peasant War, p. xi.

[47] ". . . Indeed, the south Germans appear to have been actually averse to any definite utopistic idealism such as that of Thomas Münzer, and to have tended to confine themselves strictly to the limits of the celebrated 'twelve articles' we have expressed undoubtedly the ideas and aspirations of the average man throughout Germany who took part in the movement . . . ." Ibid., p. 34.

[48] ". . . The classical expression however, of the religious-utopian side of the Peasants War, and indeed, of the closing period of the Middle Ages generally, is to be found in the doctrines and social theory of Thomas Münzer . . . ." Ibid., p. 86.

Nor had Müntzer's communism been similar to 19th-century communism or even anticipated it. On the contrary, it had been quite Medieval.[49] For Bax, Müntzer remained ". . . as before everything a theologian. This is noticeable in his pamphlets down to the very eve of the Peasants War . . . ."[50] Despite the fact that Müntzer had railed against the princes spiritual and secular, and had upheld the right of the common man to revolt, Bax could find ". . . no evidence of any constructive theory in him beyond the most casual expressions . . . ."[51]

There had also been a political side to Müntzer's activity, however, which had made its appearance after 1523. But this political activity had been directed toward the establishment ". . . of the new kingdom of God on earth, a kingdom based on the model of the primitive Christian Church as he supposed it to have been. Freedom and equality must reign here. The princes and the great ones of the earth refused to espouse the cause of the new Gospel. Hence, they must be overthrown, and the 'common man,' who was prepared to embrace the Gospel, must be raised up in their place.

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[49] ". . . so in the doctrines of Münzer we have both sides of the movement fused and presented in the guise of a religious utopia, on the traditional lines of medieval communism . . . ." Ibid., p. 87.

[50] Ibid., p. 234.

[51] Ibid.

He who would not become a citizen of the kingdom of God must be banished or killed. The great barrier to the awakening of the inward light was the riches of this world. Hence, in the kingdom of God, private wealth should cease to be, and all things should be in common."[52]

Despite the fact, however, that Bax saw nothing new in Müntzer's theories and agreed with Lassalle that ". . . although on the positive side the movements were reactionary . . . ," yet ". . . on the negative side [they were] sufficiently in accord with the contemporary trend of social evolution . . . ."[53] Thus he was able to see some progressive tendencies in Müntzer's thought, or at least in the effects of that thought, as well. ". . . Münzer's communism was still-born, but his antagonism to feudal and ecclesiastical privileges became commonplaces of the democratic thought of a later age. Again, his insistence on the paramount nature of the 'inner light' was simply a mystical way of asserting the rights of the individual within his own sphere against external authority—ideas that have likewise become the theoretical cornerstones of post-medieval movements . . . ."[54] But if Müntzer did retain some progressive tendencies, it was more in spite of himself than otherwise.

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[52] Ibid., p. 240.

[53] Ibid., p. 256.

[54] Ibid., pp. 256-57.

Nor did Bax attempt to gloss over Müntzer's famous letter to Mühlhausen. He expressly turned against both Zimmermann's and Kautsky's interpretation and asserted that Müntzer had most certainly 'backed down.'[55] In the letter Müntzer had turned from his former ideas and had returned to the bosom of the Church.[56] Bax felt that ". . . the only redeeming passage [was] one that pleads for his wife and child, that they might not be deprived of his worldly goods."[57]

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[55] Against Zimmermann Bax stated: ". . . So much must be said in spite of the attempt of Zimmermann and other admirers of Münzer to give the letter a more favourable interpretation . . . ." Ibid., p. 268. And against Kautsky he said: "The doubts suggested by Kautsky as to the genuineness of this letter are hardly tenable. It may have been to the interest of the princes that such a letter should have been written, and they may have terrorised him into writing it, in the same way as prison authorities may from time to time have terrorised innocent persons condemned to death into 'Confessing' and 'acknowledging the justice of their sentence.' But when Kautsky endeavours to impugn its having issued from Münzer by asking why he dictated it instead of writing it, the answer is sufficiently clear. A man who had so recently suffered the last extremities of the thumbscrew would hardly be able to write autograph letters." Ibid., pp. 268-69.

[56] ". . . He not merely deprecates any further attempts at insurrection, advice that might be dictated by the hopelessness of the situation, but confesses to having 'seductively and rebelliously preached many opinions, delusions and errors concerning the Holy Sacrament . . . as also against the ordinances of the universal Christian Church.' Further, he confesses himself as dying as 'a once again reconciled member of the Holy Christian Church,' praying God to forgive him his former conduct . . . ." Ibid., p. 268.

Franz Mehring touched briefly upon the figure of Müntzer in his Zur deutschen Geschichte as well, but his interpretation was the same as Kautsky's.[58] However, a curious contradiction seems to run through the section of his book which dealt with the Reformation. On the one hand, Müntzer was portrayed as the great revolutionary, the leader of the radical third party during the Reformation which demanded greater reforms than Luther had been willing to countenance, to whom the populace flocked, and, on the other hand, as the revolutionary who was never allowed to remain long enough in one place to benefit from this popular adulation.

The way in which Mehring refutes ideas and historical interpretations alien to the Marxist view is instructive in reading Marxist history in general, for it can be found in all other Marxist historians here under discussion. Dealing with Müntzer's ostensible recantation and subsequent death as a repentant sinner, Mehring maintained that ". . . the assertion that he [Müntzer] had died a repentant sinner has not been proven and is just a slanderous gossip which writers in the pay (Soldschreiber) of the ruling class employ against liberators of the people . . . ."[59]

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[57] Ibid.

[58] We have already noted his dependence upon Kautsky in the chapter on Luther.

With the book by Ernst Bloch[60] an aspect of Müntzer's thought was stressed which had been noticed by Engels, Bebel, Kautsky, and Bax, but which, with the exception of Bax, had not played much of a role in their assessment of the man; this was Müntzer's chiliasm. Bloch claimed that from July 1523 onward, after his open breach with Luther, Müntzer became ". . . a class conscious, revolutionary, chiliastic communist . . . ."[61] For Bloch the real importance of Müntzer lay precisely in his ability to inspire the peasants and the city 'proletariat' with this chiliastic vision—the Kingdom of God on earth where equality would reign.[62]

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[59] Mehring, Zur deutschen Geschichte, p. 65.

[60] Ernst Bloch, Thomas Münzer als Theologe der Revolution (Munich, 1921). A second edition was published in 1960 by the Aufbau Verlag, Berlin.

[61] Ibid. (1960 edition), p. 21.

The impact of this vision, according to Bloch, had been particularly great because the material conditions of the peasants and city worker had been getting worse.[63] With the progressive worsening of conditions for these classes the desire for justice had increased. This desire had taken the form of a longing for the return of a just ruler such as Barbarossa had been. With time it had changed into a longing for a more simple, primitive form of Christianity.[64] Prophets such as Joachim of Fiora had appeared from time to time to play upon and strengthen this desire for the Kingdom of God. It had imbued the Hussite movement and the Peasant Revolt of 1525.[65] Astrologers had believed that the year 1524 would bring some momentous change. All these things had made the people, particularly the oppressed classes, accept the ideas of Müntzer who had promised them the Kingdom of God here upon earth where the high would be made low and everyone would share of the common goods.

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[62] The ideas of a vision to inspire the masses can be seen in all the Marxists to a greater or a lesser degree, from Marx onward. Marx held up to his followers the vision of the classless society as the inevitable result of the progress of history. The classical formulation, however, was made by George Sorel in his Reflections on Violence where he plays up the idea of the 'myth.' But it is interesting to note that even such mystical socialist thinkers as a Moeller van den Bruck could speak in terms of a Joachim of Fiora of Das Dritte Reich (English translation, London, 1934; the German edition appeared in 1923), toward which the Germans should strive. "To find even a suggestion of original German ideas we have to turn to Communism and hunt among the welter of syndicalist, anarchistic, medieval trains of thought inherited from the Peasants' War, or from Thomas Münzer, while German democracy remained enslaved by demagogues," p. 30. The ideas of a Moeller van den Bruck were a reaction to the 19th-century bourgeois social and ethical mores and this may also have influenced Ernst Bloch in his thinking. But Moeller van den Bruck may also have been influenced by the Sorelian idea of the 'myth' for he did spend some time in France from 1902 onward; although Sorel's book first appeared in 1908, it had appeared in certain socialist magazines. See Klemens von Klemperer, Germany's New Conservatism (Princeton, 1957), pp. 153-69; and also Fritz Stern, The Politics of Cultural Despair (Berkeley, 1961), pp. 183-267.

[63] Bloch, Thomas Münzer, p. 44.

This chiliasm, which Bloch emphasized, can very nicely be compared to the idea of the 'myth' of Sorel. In the latter's words:

> Experience shows that the framing of a future, in some indeterminate time, may when it is done in a certain way, be very effective, and have very few inconveniences; this happens when the anticipations of a future take the form of those myths, which enclose with them, all the strongest inclinations which recur to the mind with the insistence in all

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[64] *Ibid.*, p. 46.

[65] *Ibid.*, p. 51.

> the circumstances of life; and which give an aspect of complete reality to the hopes of immediate action by which, more easily than by any other method, men can reform their desires, passions, and mental activity.[66]

Sorel himself saw the importance of this 'myth' for early Christianity:

> The first Christians expected the return of Christ and the total ruin of the pagan world, with the inauguration of the kingdom of the saints at the end of the first generation. The catastrophe did not come to pass, but Christian thought profited so greatly from the apoclyptic myth that certain contemporary scholars maintain that the whole preaching of Christ referred solely to this one point.[67]

It was this apocalyptic vision of the imminent establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth that had made it possible for Müntzer to attract so many followers. According to Bloch, it answered the needs of the time and spurred the peasants on to revolution. The similarity between Sorel's 'myth' and Bloch's chiliasm is striking; Bloch may well have been influenced by Sorel although there is no obvious evidence for believing so.[68]

In the beginning of this chapter it was noted how Zimmermann's interpretation of Müntzer merged into that of Engels' Marxist interpretation. It has at times happened that the undogmatic Marxist

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[66] George Sorel, Reflections on Violence (New York, 1961), pp. 124-25.

[67] Ibid., p. 125.

[68] Bloch's emphasis on Müntzer's chiliasm, of course, stands in close connection with his own Prinzip der Hoffnung philosophy. See his Das Prinzip Hoffnung, vols. I-III (Berlin, 1954-1959).

Müntzer interpretation has come very close to those of socialistically inclined non-Marxists. A case in point is the study by the Frenchman, L.G. Walter, entitled: Thomas Münzer et Les Luttes Sociales à L'Epoque de la Reforme.[69] Walter produced perhaps the most comprehensive study of Müntzer to his time with a similarly comprehensive Müntzer bibliography. Although Walter was not a Marxist and although he had certain reservations about Zimmermann's and the Marxists' interpretations of Müntzer,[70] yet he still saw Müntzer as the great social revolutionary of the 16th century. Annemarie Lohmann was of the opinion that had he read Karl Holl's essay on Thomas Müntzer, which he had omitted from his bibliography, he might have reached a different conclusion.[71]

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[69] L.G. Walter, Thomas Münzer et Les Luttes Sociales à L'Epoque de la Reforme (Paris, 1927).

[70] "Il convient toutefois d'ajouter que l'ouvrage de Zimmermann où Munzer tient une place d'honneur doit être consulté avec une certaine prudence. L'auteur est un admirateur enthousiaste de Munzer et il se laisse trop souvent entrainer par son admiration aux dépens de la vérité historique.

". . . Quelques dix ans après parait un livre dont la valeur historique qui modeste mais qui reflète d'une facon parfaite un certain courant d'idies qui s'etait formé dans la société allemande de la second moitie du 19 siècle. C'est l'ouvrage de Karl Kautsky: 'Les Précurseurs du Socialisme.' Dans ce livre, le célèbre théoricien de la Social-democratie allemande consecre une trés large place à Thomas Munzer. On peut même dire qu'il a une certaine prédilection pour ce personnage. Il fait de liu l'incarnation même des aspirations socialistes à l'époque de la Reforme et étudie son cas avec la plus grande attention mais en faissant oeuvre de propagandiste plutôt que d'historien. On consultera son livre avec profit pour être renseigné sur la conception que s'etaient faite, de Munzer, les milieux socialisants allemands. Bebel et Engels, tout en ne parlant de liu qu'incidemment dans leurs ouvrages consacrés à la guerre des paysans, contribuerent indiscutablement à maintenir un courant d'opinion favorable à Munzer dans les grandes masses populaires." Ibid., pp. 23-25.

B. The New Orthodoxy

It is apparent from the foregoing that a certain amount of flexibility existed in the interpretation of the life and times of Thomas Müntzer to this point. However, with the beginning of post-World War II Marxist historiography of Müntzer, a new orthodoxy immediately became evident. This new orthodoxy was brilliantly illustrated in the study by the eminent Russian historian, M.M. Smirin.[72] All the ideas of Engels were faithfully accepted and defended in chapters filled with lengthy, involved, though for the most part, unconvincing argumentation. A typical mode of reasoning is the following:

> Engels evaluates Müntzer quite differently. It is true, even Müntzer is not free from the chiliastic ravings of primitive Christianity; despite this Engels finds in him the first 'anticipations of future history' and a new foundation for the

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[71] Annemarie Lohmann, Zur geistigen Entwicklung Thomas Müntzers (Leipzig & Berlin, 1931), p. 2.

[72] Smirin, Volksreformation.

> communistic tendencies in his teaching. 'First with Münzer,' writes Engels, 'are these communistic tendencies embodied in a large section of society, first with him are these tendencies given a certain definite expression, and since him we find them in every subsequent social upheaval again, until they eventually merge with the modern proletarian movement.'[73]

After this ex cathedra judgment of the 'Marxist Father' has been quoted, the facts are then marshalled to substantiate it. This, to say the least, is an unhistorical way of writing history, although it may be the apex of orthodoxy itself in the Marxist camp since Smirin received the Stalin prize second class for writing this monument of scholarship. It is interesting to note that Kautsky is discounted as a reactionary and a revisionist and his differences with Engels regarded as rank heresy.[74] Engels had himself written Kautsky, as has been noted, and commended the latter on his book, particularly on the section dealing with Müntzer. Thus Smirin, in his orthodox zeal, went out of his way, some seven hundred pages out of his way, to prove what Engels had recognized as wrong!

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[73] Ibid., p. 59. Other instances can be found on pages 87, 99, 278, 302, 445, 565, and other instances too numerous to mention here.

[74] Ibid., p. 276. Kautsky, by asserting that he could find no new ideas in Thomas Müntzer, really negated Zimmermann's and Engels' concept of Müntzer as the rational social revolutionary, of the man far in advance of his times. It is no wonder, therefore, that Smirin, in strict dependence upon Engels, should attack Kautsky. In her review of Smirin's book, Köditz stated: "In diesem ersten Teil seines Werkes gelingt es Smirin, die These Kautsky's Münzer sei in seiner theoretischen Grundlage nicht über die mittelalterlichen Sekten hinausgelangt überzeugend zu widerlegen. Er bringt den eindeutigen Beweis, dass die Lehre Münzers auf völlig neuen Voraussetzungen beruhte . . . ." ZfG, 1 (1953), 3, 508.

As the title indicates, the stress throughout is on the Volkstümlichkeit of Müntzer. Müntzer was the great leader of the downtrodden masses,[75] the class of the future, in comparison to Luther who, after his initial revolutionary period, became a reactionary just like the German liberals of 1848. Müntzer's religion was not passive but active: ". . . for Münzer, however, the emphasis of religious life lay in the active participation of man in society . . . ."[76] Müntzer's concept of the Kingdom of God had really been devoid of any religious connotations: it was the only guise through which he could communicate with the people, it was the only language they could understand. Therefore Smirin was once again in complete agreement with Engels whom he quoted:

> 'By the kingdom of God, Münzer understood nothing else than a state of society without private property, and without superimposed state powers opposed to the members of society. All existing authorities, as far as they did not submit and join the revolution, he taught, must be overthrown, all work and all property must be shared in common, and complete equality must be introduced.'[77]

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[75] Ibid., p. 59

[76] Ibid., p. 83.

[77] Ibid., p. 87

Nor had the ideas of Müntzer remained sectarian. Much rather they had given expression to the people's conception of what the Reformation should be.[78] And although the people had talked in Biblical terminology, Müntzer had really reached beneath this outer shell and had penetrated to the heart of the matter.[79]

Although Engels had stressed the communistic tendencies in Müntzer's thought and although Smirin affirmed that these were undoubtedly there, yet to stress them unduly as aims Müntzer had tried to realize in the Peasant War would never do. Not only would it have made these aims appear contradictory to the desires of the peasants who were fighting for their property rights unencumbered by the rights of overlords, but it would have made it impossible to fit Müntzer into the frühbürgerliche Revolution; he must ever appear as someone who had anticipated a future society but had not had his feet on solid bourgeois ground. Since Engels had formulated his theory of the early bourgeois nature of the Reformation period only some time after he had written his Bauernkrieg, he had not faced this problem. Smirin, however, came face to face with it and was therefore forced to tone down Müntzer's communistic tendencies in order to make him play any kind of an important role in the frühbürgerliche Revolution. Thus Smirin argued that Müntzer had seen the Peasant War as a period of transition to the classless society but had not really hoped to realize such a society at the time. His program had really been reduced to confiscating the lands of the lords in order to distribute them among the poor and to destroying the princes and transferring the control of government to the common man. Despite the fact that Smirin attempted to play down Müntzer's communistic tendencies, he allowed the latter to remain the representative of the peasant-plebian wing of the movement as well as the exponent of a Volksreformation. But although this Volksreformation had shown the bourgeoisie the way in which it could have inaugurated the bourgeois era, yet it had not really been bourgeois itself.[80]

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[78] Ibid., p. 279.

[79] One could also, depending on one's ideological position, characterize Smirin's dependence upon Engels as Hanna Köditz did in her review. "Es ist ein Beweis für die Genialität Engels', wenn der sowjetische Forscher fast hundert Jahre später nach gründlicher Untersuchung des nunmehr erheblich umfangreicheren Quellenmaterials in seinem Werk, das, wie Umfang, Fülle der verarbeiteten Literatur und Sorgfalt der Quellenanalyse zeigen, ein Ergebnis jahrelanger Studien ist, die grundsätzlichen Schlussfolgerungen Engels' aufs neue bestätigt, erläutert und vertieft. Smirin beweist gleichzeitig die Überlegenheit der sowjetischen Geschichtswissenschaft, die sich die Methode des historischen Materilaismus zu eigen gemacht hat, gegenüber der bürgerlichen Geschichtsschreibung." Review of Smirin's Volksreformation in ZfG, 1 (1953), 3, 506. Very little comment is needed after the results of our investigation in Chapter IV.

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[80] Smirin, Volksreformation, pp. 296-324.

Smirin's study first appeared in Russian in 1947 and then in a German translation in 1952. In the same year, Alfred Meusel also produced a study entitled: Thomas Müntzer und sein Zeit, but this was very little more than a repetition of the insights arrived at by earlier Marxist studies. Although Max Steinmetz praised it for its Parteilichkeit for the peasants and Müntzer,[81] he still had to criticize more than he could praise.[82] In the following year, Kamnitzer, who had assembled the documents appended in Meusel's book, himself attempted to evaluate Müntzer's role in the *frühbürgerliche Revolution*.[83] But he did not rise above the Marxist commonplaces either except in one instance where he asserted that,

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[81] "Ein weiterer Vorzug des Buches ist die Auseinandersetzung mit der bürgerlichen Wissenschaft im allgemeinen und mit der bürgerlichreaktionären Darstellungen des Bauernkrieges und Thomas Müntzers in besonderen . . . in diesen und anderen Fällen wird ein konsequenter Kampf geführt gegen die Entstellungen und Verfälschungen der historischen Wahrheit durch die reaktionären Geschichtsschreiber . . . ." ZfG, 1 (1953), 6, 971.

[82] "Nach der Behandlung der Vorzüge des Werkes muss jedoch eine Reihe von Mängeln festgestellt werden. Was bei der Lektüre besonders auffällt, ist die Tatsache, dass die Forschung nicht in genügendem Masse ausgewertet und ihre Ergebnissen der Darstellung nutzbar gemacht worden ist . . . ." Ibid. Steinmetz then had to chide Meusel for a number of factual errors which, however, had not really distorted the correct interpretation.

> Müntzer's teachings became a closed *Weltanschauung* in the course of time, a closed system, [like Marxism] which none were allowed to withdraw from; whereas the Taborites, the exponents of the Bundschuh, and the Piper of Niklashausen developed only cooperative social ideas, Müntzer developed an organic social order without, however, losing sight of the demands of his time. Already in Allstedt he knew very well that he was living in a time of preparation for revolution and not in the time of revolution itself.[84]

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[83] In his *Vorgeschichte des Bauernkrieges*. Kamnitzer stated of Müntzer's biographers: "Seine Biographen von Melanchthon bis zu Ernst Sommer, sind in Deutschland entweder Feinde Müntzer's gewesen oder haben es nicht vermocht, sich selbst von den Verleumdungen und Vorurteilen der Gegner Müntzers frei zu halten. Weder Zimmermann noch Kautsky haben die universale Bedeutung dieses Mannes gewürdigt, wie die Wahrheit, wie sein Wirken und sein Einfluss es verlangen. Nur Friedrich Engels hat seine Rolle erfasst. Heute allerdings können wir auf marxistische Forschungsargeiten der sowjetischen Historiker, vor allem Smirin, aufbauen, und die Untersuchung von Alfred Meusel gibt der wissenschaftlichen Arbeit in Deutschland festen Boden," p. 120. This despite Steinmetz's criticism of Meusel. One should also point out that the Marxists are guilty, with regard to Luther, of the same crime they accuse bourgeois Müntzer biographers of.

[84] *Ibid*., p. 123. Kamnitzer is obviously alluding to the fact that, according to him, Müntzer had realized that the proletarian revolution could not yet be victorious because of the historical dialectic. But even here he had to allow himself to be criticized by Annemarie Müller who stated in her review: ". . . Aber die Behauptung, 'Müntzers Lehre wurde im Laufe der Jahre eine lückenlose Weltanschauung ein geschlossenes System, dem sich niemand entziehen dürfte,' dürfte übertrieben sein . . . ." *ZfG*, 2 (1954), 4, 134-35. That is stating it mildly, with comradely kindness.

An integral aspect of the social revolutionary Müntzer image, as has been noted in the chapter on Zimmermann, was the assumption that Müntzer had been the originator of the Twelve Articles, or at least that he had exercised a decisive influence on the initial stages of the revolution in the south. Smirin had argued for such an influence despite the fact that there was no evidence for such an influence in the documents.[85] It was no wonder, therefore, that a student of his should try to prove that Müntzer, or at least a member of Müntzer's party, had been the author of a pamphlet entitled: "An die Versammlung gemeiner Bauernschaft . . . ."[86] Hesselbarth found that the content came closest to the teachings of Müntzer, but he had difficulty finding certain typically Müntzerian concepts in it. Hence he was forced to argue, as had Smirin before him, that Müntzer had himself begun to give up trying to implement his communistic ideas.[87] Thus, in order to be able to extend Müntzer's influence into the southern part of Germany, Hesselbarth had to play down those ideas of Müntzer which had made him most attractive to the Marxists in the first place. But even, concluded Hesselbarth, if Müntzer had not written it, Hans Hut, the faithful follower of Müntzer, could very easily have done so and spread Müntzer's teachings throughout Franconia.[88]

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[85] "Die Ereignisse des Bauernkrieges spielten sich in Oberschwaben in Abwesenheit Münzers ab. In den Quellen finden wir keine Hinweise auf seine direkte Teilnahme an dieser Bewegung. Nichtsdestoweniger bezieht Engels ganz Südwestdeutschland in die Sphäre seiner Tätigkeit ein und ist der Ansicht, dass Münzer während seines Aufenthalts im Dorf Griessen und Klettgau 'der Mittelpunkt der ganzen revolutionären Bewegung von Südwestdeutschland' wird und 'die Verbindung von Sachsen und Thüringen über Franken und Schwaben bis nach dem Elsass und der Schweizer Grenze' organisiert. Engels spricht von der Existenz der Münzerschen Partei in den Hauptgebieten des Bauernkrieges . . . Fridolin Sicher, auf dessen Chronik wir noch eingehen werden, spricht nicht von der Lehre Münzers und nicht von Münzerschen Predigern sondern von lutherschen Propagandisten, die die Bauern eine völlig neue Auffassung vom Evangelium lehrten und sich sehr aktiv auf diesem Gebiet betätigten; Zimmermann macht jedoch darauf aufmerksam, dass man unter Predigern jene radikalen Propagandisten der Reformation verstehen müsse, die mit der lutherschen Lehre wenig gemein hatten und die an die Lehre Münzers streiften." Smirin, Volksreformation, p. 445.

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[86] Helmut Hesselbarth, "Eine Flugschrift aus dem Grossen Deutschen Bauernkrieg," ZfG, 1 (1953), 4, 527-51. Hesselbarth refers to Zimmermann in the following terms: ". . . Als leidenschaftlicher Demokrat schrieb er seine lebendige, der Wahrheit von allen bürgerlichen Darstellungen am nächsten kommende Schilderung des Grossen Bauernkrieges . . . ," p. 527. Hesselbarth should have taken a closer look!

[87] "Einige Fragen freilich bleiben offen, nämlich erstens die Frage des gemeinschaftlichen Eigentums. Diese Frage wird in unserer Flugschrift nicht einmal berührt, obgleich sie Bestandteil der Münzerschen Lehre ist. Allerdings traten die Ansichten der Vergesellschaftung alles Privateigentums, die den utopischen Teil der Lehre Müntzers ausmachen und die lediglich von einem kleinen Teil der Plebejer unterstützt, von der Masse der Bauern aber abgelehnt wurden, bei Müntzer selbst immer mehr in den Hintergrund. Auf jeden Fall standen sie, aus den genannten Gründen, gleichbedeutend neben seiner Lehre der Vergesellschaftung des Eigentums der grossen Ausbeuter. Zum aunderen wird eine Flugschrift, die vorwiegend an Bauern addressiert ist, diese Frage klugerweise überhaupt nicht stellen . . . ." Ibid., p. 538.

Although Smirin agreed in essence with Hesselbarth's position,[89] yet in 1956 he believed him to have gone too far.[90] Smirin himself came to the conclusion that the political point of view of the author of the pamphlet could not have been the same as Müntzer's,[91] for the author had called on the peasants not to touch the property of their antagonists, whereas Müntzer, ". . . as the protector of the small, hard earned property of the peasants, turned against the feudal oppression and usurpation of rights by feudal Lords. Müntzer, however, wanted to divide up the great feudal holdings and the wealth of the rich . . . among the peasants and workers. He viewed an equal division as the beginning of communism . . . ."[92] The pamphlet had much rather been an expression of the radical bourgeois party which had hoped that the peasant revolt would do away with feudalism and princely rule.[93] This meant, however, that Müntzer's role in the revolt outside Thuringia had been decidedly decreased.

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[88] Ibid., p. 550.

[89] Hesselbarth's essay originated as a seminar paper in one of Smirin's classes.

[90] Smirin, "Eine Anonyme Politische Flugschrift aus der Zeit des Grossen Bauernkrieges," Beitrage zum Geschichtsbild, pp. 72-87.

[91] "Wenn man die sozialen und politischen Anschauungen Müntzers mit denen des Verfassers der uns interessierenden Flugschrift vergleicht kann man sich leicht davon überzeugen, dass sie nicht identisch sein können . . . ." Ibid., p. 82.

In another essay in the same volume, Max Steinmetz published a portion of his Habilitationschrift under the title, "Zur Entstehung der Müntzerlegende."[94] Steinmetz set out to show that the Müntzer image from the Reformation to the French Revolution had been determined by the polemical pamphlets of Luther, Melanchthon, and Agricola. He concluded that ever since the French Revolution, however, the legend had gradually been broken down.[95] In contrast to Smirin,

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[92] Ibid., pp. 83-84.

[93] Ibid., p. 87.

[94] Ibid., pp. 35-70. I was unable to obtain a copy of Steinmetz' Das Müntzerbild in der Geschichtsschreibung . . . (Jena, 1956). The librarian wrote me the following upon my enquiry: "Leider ist es uns nicht möglich, Ihnen obenerwähnte Arbeit zur Verfügung zu stellen, da dieselbe hier noch nicht eingegangen ist. Trotz wiederholter Reklamationen hat der Verfasser die Habilitationsschrift noch nicht abgeliefert. Wir bedauern es sehr, Ihnen zur Zeit nicht helfen zu können," March 10, 1966. While Steinmetz was investigating "Müntzer-Legende," he should also have concerned himself with the one Zimmermann created and which Engels and the Marxists have propagated.

[95] "Erst das neue Verständnis für revolutionäre Ereignisse und Massenkämpfe, das zwischen den grossen französischen Revolution von 1789 und 1848 als Folgeerscheinung der tiefgehenden gesellschaftlichen Umwälzungen. Nun erst wurde die Müntzer-Legende als solche erkannt und bekämpft." Beiträge zum Geschichtsbild, p. 68.

Steinmetz had high praise for the studies of bourgeois historians and even defended Carl Hinrichs against Smirin's attack.[96] And, while lamenting the fact that the Marxist historians before him had not paid sufficient attention to these studies, a fact which had been detrimental to the Marxist studies, he called on non-Marxist historians not to commit the same error. He for his part advocated a scholarly discussion of the moot points in Müntzer studies between the two sides and ended with a quotation from Ranke: "for truth can only be one."

A fresher wind had begun to blow in Marxist historiography once again, noticeable even in Smirin's study of the pamphlet his student Hesselbarth had attributed to the Müntzer circle. Both Smirin's as well as Steinmetz's essays appeared in 1956, the same year in which Chaikovskaia opened her attack on Smirin's interpretation of the Reformation. One of the six participants in the ensuing debate had been the Czech historian, Joseph Macek, who had made the claim that the bourgeois ideology of an Ulrich Zwingli had been the ideology which had gripped the peasants of

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[96] ". . . besonders aber das Buch von Hinrichs bieten wertvolle Ansätze zu einer fruchtbaren Auseinandersetzung. (Smirin's Kritik an Hinrichs muss als völlig verfehlt und unsachlich zurückgewiesen werden. Wie kann man, lediglich gestützt auf eine Besprechung in der English Historical Review, behaupten, Hinrichs wiederhole 'die schändliche Behauptung,' dass Müntzer Joachimist gewesen sei und ihn soziale Probleme 'nicht interessierten'? Dass Hinrichs verleumdisch behaupte, Müntzer habe die Bauern verraten? . . .)." *Ibid*., p. 96.

Southern Germany.[97] Müntzer's influence in this region, therefore, had not been as great as Zimmermann and his Marxist admirers had assumed. In a following article Macek proceeded to lessen Müntzer's influence in the region of the Tyrol,[98] and in a third he asserted that the Twelve Articles had formed a closed political program of the peasants of Southern Germany—the moderate, constitutional party—whereas the more radical poor peasants and city paupers had clung to Müntzer. Müntzer, however, had failed to create such a closed program which might have unified the revolutionary movement.[99]

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[97] Joseph Macek, "K diskussi o charaktere reformacii i krestianskoe voinie v Germanii," VI, 3 (1959), 120. This theory was accepted by Steinmetz and constituted one of his theses on the frühbürgerliche Revolution. See ZfG, 7 (1960), 122.

[98] Joseph Macek, "Zu den Anfängen des Tiroler Bauernkrieges," Historica, I (Prague, 1959), 180.

[99] ". . . Dem kämpfenden armen Volk allerdings konnte dieses Programm [Twelve Articles] nicht genügen. Die kleinen Hintersassen, das Gesinde, die Tagelöhner wurden eher von den radikalen Gedanken angezogen, die Thomas Müntzer verkündete. Müntzer aber hatte leider kein geschlossenes, lapider formuliertes Programm geschaffen, das zum zentralen Kampfprogramm der deutschen revolutionären Bewegung hätte werden können." Macek, "Das Revolutionäre Programm des deutschen Bauernkrieges von 1526," Historica, II (Prague, 1960), 111.

During the latter half of the 1950's a veritable spate of articles and books appeared from Marxist pens which were dedicated in whole or at least in part to Thomas Müntzer. In 1956, Eberhard Wolfgramm published a German translation with introduction of Müntzer's Prague Manifesto which had originally been translated into the Czech language.[100] In the introduction he attempted to place the blame for Müntzer's failure to rouse the citizens of Prague on this poor Czech translation of Müntzer's Manifesto.[101] The year following, Hermann Goebke,[102] on the basis of some new evidence relating to a Thomas Müntzer asserted that the latter had really been born in 1467 or 1468 and had gained his religious and social views from the Augustinian monastery in Quedlinburg where he had been a monk before matriculating at the University of Leipzig in 1506.[103] But although his article was reprinted in part in the collected essays on the frühbürgerliche Revolution,[104] Max Steinmetz, one of the editors, criticized it rather severely in a concluding summation.[105]

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[100] Eberhard Wolfgramm, "Der Prager Anschlag des Thomas Müntzer in der Handschrift der Leipziger Universitätsbibliothek," WZdKMU, 6 (1956/57), I, 295-308.

[101] Ibid., p. 298.

[102] Hermann Goebke, "Neue Forschungen über Thomas Müntzer bis zum Jahre 1520," Harz-Zeitschrift, 9 (1957), 1-30.

[103] Ibid., pp. 3-6.

In the same year a Czech study attempted a revaluation of the impact upon Müntzer of the latter's Prague visit.[106] In order to demonstrate the impact of Hussite ideas upon Müntzer, and thus bring him into the orbit of the revolutionary Hussite influence, Husa emphasized Müntzer's adherence to Lutheran ideas prior to the latter's

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[104] Hermann Goebke, "Thomas Müntzer—familiengeschichtlich und zeitgeschichtlich gesehen," Frühbürgerliche Revolution, pp. 91-100.

[105] ". . . Herrn Goebkes Hinweis, dass seine Forschungen nirgendwo auf einen ähnlichen Namen in dieser Zeit gestossen seien, ist bei der Lückenhaftigkeit der Überlieferungen nicht überzeugend. Die Behauptung, Thomas Müntzer sei Augustiner—Eremit gewesen und habe in Quedlinburg bis 1506 im Kloster gelebt, scheint mir völlig aus der Luft gegriffen zu sein. Goebke braucht diese These, um die nahezu vier Jahrzehnte zwischen Geburt und Immatrikulation in Leipzig zu überbrücken. Wenn er dann sagt, er habe sich dafür entschieden, dass Müntzer vor 1506 Augustinermönch in Quedlinburg gewesen sei, so wäre uns wichtiger, die Entscheidung Thomas Müntzers zu kennen; aber leider ist uns darüber nicht das Allergeringste bekannt. So lange aber keine weiteren Dokumente gefunden werden, bleibt das alles eine mehr als luftige Hypothese." Ibid., pp. 301-302. The following non-Marxists also took issue with Goebke: A. Zumkeller, "Thomas Müntzer—Augustiner?" Augustiniana, IX (1959), 380-85; G. Franz, "Zeitschriftenschau," ARG, 50 (1959), 258; and lastly, Erwin Iserloh, "Zur Gestalt und Biographie Thomas Münzers," Trierer Theologische Zeitschrift, 4 (1962), 248-53.

[106] Vaclav Husa, Thomas Müntzer a Cechy (Prague, 1957).

Prague visit.[107] Nor did Husa believe that Müntzer had gained his revolutionary chiliastic teachings from the Zwickau Prophets, in fact these teachings could only be found here after Markus Stübner, one of their number, had returned from Prague.[108] It had been in Prague, under the influence of these Hussite ideas that Müntzer had begun to move in the direction which was to lead to his break with Luther and his development into the *Volksreformator*.[109] This development had first been manifested in Müntzer's Prague Manifesto.[110]

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[107] Ibid., p. 29. In contrast to Smirin, Volksreformation, pp. 88 and 110, who had argued for an early break with Luther to demonstrate Müntzer's independent development. See also Hubert Kirchner, Johannes Sylvius Egranus (Berlin, 1961), who stated: ". . . Smirins Massegebliche These ist, dass zwischen Luther und Müntzer, und zwar von Anfang an, ein prinzipieller Gegensatz bestand, eindeutig feststellbar seit 1520, dem Auftreten Müntzers in Zwickau . . . ," p. 48.

[108] Husa, Thomas Müntzer, p. 35. Husa was also of the opinion that the rejection of infant baptism had been imported from Bohemia as well.

In 1958 a Marxist interpretation in the popular vein appeared in France written by Maurice Pianzola.[111] However, besides a few references to Müntzer in French literature, it contained nothing of scholarly interest. And in 1960 Dietrich Lösche enquired into the social structure of Mühlhausen and the role the class conflicts played in the revolutionary movement led by Müntzer.[112] The really important reinterpretation, however, came from the pen of Gerhard Zschäbitz.

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[109] *Ibid.*, p. 80.

[110] *Ibid.*, p. 90. Husa was criticized by both Joseph Macek and Bernhard Töpfer in their reviews for having overemphasized the influence on Müntzer of his Prague visit. ". . . Er gibt zwar an einer Stelle zu, dass bereits in Zwickau Müntzers Gedanken eine andere Richtung zu nehmen begannen aber er entwertet diese Feststellung selbst, indem er am Schluss zusammenfassend erklärt, dass erst in Prag jene Gedanken Gestalt zu gewinnen begannen, die Müntzer zu einem Revolutionär werden liessen. Gegen eine derartige Auffassung hat bereits J. Macek Einwände erhoben und erklärt, dass H. die Bedeutung des Prager Aufenthalts beträchtlich überschätze, während er Müntzers Wirken in Zwickau unterschätaze. Hier liegt zweifellos eine wesentliche Schwäche der Arbeit H.s, der offensischtlich auf Grund der Tatsache, dass das Prager Manifest als erste grössere Schrift Müntzers uns erstmalig einen tiefen Einblick in seine Anschauungen gewährt, folgert, dass derartige Gedanken erst damals Gestalt angenommen haben . . . ." Bernhard Töpfer, "Review," *ZfG*, 8 (1960), 7, 1689.

[111] Maurice Pianzola, *Thomas Munzer ou la Guerre des Paysans* (Paris, 1958).

In an earlier part of this essay it was noted that Engels had come to modify his position vis-à-vis Müntzer and the Peasant War toward the end of his life.[113] Three letters in particular bear witness to this modification, or, as Engels would have put it, this clarification.[114] Especially in his letter to Bloch, dated September 21, 1890, Engels made some revealing statements. He pointed out here that never had he or Marx stated that ". . . the economic element is the only determining one . . . ," but only that it was the most important element. Thus he could go on to say that ". . . political, legal, philosophical theories, religious ideas and their future development into systems of dogma—also exercise their influence upon the course of historical struggles and in many cases preponderate [my italics] in determining their form." In the same letter he stated further that he and Marx were, however, responsible in part ". . . for the fact that younger writers lay more stress on the economic side than is due it . . . ," for they, Marx and Engels, had been defending the materialist interpretation of history and in so doing overstated their case against those who would not grant their main contention. Those 'Marxist' followers, however, who had later on written on the same subject, had become far too narrow-minded and exclusive in their materialist approach. Therefore Engels closed the letter by saying, ". . . And I cannot exempt many of the more recent 'Marxists' from this reproach, for the most wonderful rubbish has been produced from this quarter too."

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[112] Dietrich Lösche, "Achtmänner, Ewiger Bund Gottes und Ewiger Rat, Zur Geschichte der revolutionären Bewegung in Mühlhausen i. Th. 1523 bis 1525," Jahrbuch für Wirtschaftsgeschichte, 1 (1960), 135-60.

[113] Writing to Bebel about Kautsky on July 24, 1885, Engels stated: ". . . So that he has absolutely no ideas of what really scientific work means. There he has thoroughly burnt his fingers a few times, with his history of population and later with the articles on marriage in primitive times. In all friendship I rubbed that well into him too and spare him nothing in this respect: on this side I criticise all his things mercilessly. Fortunately, however, I can comfort him with the fact that I did exactly the same in my impudent youth and only learnt the way one has to work from Marx." Correspondence, p. 440.

[114] Engels to Bloch, September 21, 1890, Correspondence, p. 475; Engels to Mehring, July 14, 1894, ibid., p. 510; and Engels to Kautsky, May 21, 1895, E/K, Briefwechsel, p. 423.

It was this reflective position of Engels which the next of our Marxist historians, Gerhard Zschäbitz,[115] took as the point of departure for his study of Müntzer and Anabaptism in Central Germany.

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[115] Gerhard Zschäbitz, Zur mitteldeutschen Wiedertäuferbewegung.

This made historical interpretation more difficult for Zschäbitz[116] since a monistic approach from the materialistic point of view was no longer tenable—he had to take into consideration above all, once again, religion.[117] The importance of religion as an historical phenomenon could hardly be overestimated during this period, but this religious activity did not rise out of an innate human need; it was imposed upon the masses from above by the ruling classes and their minion educators; every infraction or deviation was severely punished.[118] Thus Zschäbitz, the Marxist, still denied man's need for religious expression; religion, however, was no longer considered a façade behind which one must discover the essential Müntzer. Religion was recognized as one historical force, a part of that ideological superstructure which rested on the economic base but which in turn modified the influence of that economic base. Once, of course, it was granted that the economic factor is only one of many factors active in the historical process, albeit the most important of these, there was created an opportunity for divergence of opinion in the Marxist interpretation of history. And Zschäbitz did take issue, however gently, with former Marxist interpretations of this period, not only with those of revisionists like Kautsky, but also with the orthodox themselves, Engels and Smirin.[119]

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[116] Ibid., p. 119. ". . . Genug! Das Problem ist sehr vielschichtig."

[117] Ibid. ". . . Im ganzen gesehen muss die Furcht vor dem göttlichen Gericht als ausserordentlich wichtiger geschichtsmässiger Faktor in Rechnung bestellt werden . . . ."

[118] Ibid., pp. 19-20.

In the opinion of Zschäbitz, the Müntzer-problem lay in how to differentiate between the religious element in Müntzer's thought and the social-revolutionary element, for these two strands seemed to be inextricably intertwined in Müntzer's thinking. To try to eliminate the religious element completely, or to view it as a mere façade for his revolutionary plans, as Engels [!] and Smirin had done, and give Müntzer the appearance of a modern Marxist revolutionary, was highly dubious.[120] Müntzer had been a theologian and, even measured by the standards of his own day, a deeply religious man.[121] But at the same time there had been certain ideas in Müntzer's thought which had looked into the future, particularly with regard to his social-revolutionary activity. His main idea, however, that of the union of the elect and their separation from the godless, had its origin in the chiliastic expectations of the Middle Ages. And it is precisely this chiliastic expectation which held together the two disparate elements in Müntzer's thought—the mystical-religious and the social-revolutionary.[122]

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[119] Ibid., see especially pp. 38-39, and 44-46.

[120] Ibid., pp. 36-37. Thus Zschäbitz uses the late Engels to correct the early Engels.

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[121] This tendency to play down the 'modern' aspect of Müntzer's thought was noted and commended by his Marxist reviewer. ". . . Beachtung verdienen hierbei die Ausführungen über Thomas Müntzer, weil Z. den ernsthaften Versuch macht, ein Bild des Sozialrevolutionärs Müntzer zu geben, ohne diese Persönlichkeit in unhistorischer Weise zu modernisieren und die religiösen Grundaspekte seiner Anschauungen zu schmälern. Wenn man sich auch gewünscht hätte, dass Z. hierbei seine vom bürgerlichen Müntzerbild abweichende Auffassung ebenso präzise formuliert hätte wie seine kritische Bemerkungen zu dem Buch von Smirin (S. 36f., 44), so wird man diese doch grösstenteils akzeptieren können. Sicher hat Z. auch recht, wenn er Müntzer nach seiner Gefangennahme geschriebene Abmahnung an die Mühlhäuser vom 17. Mai 1525 für echt hält, in der Müntzer die Ursache der Niederlage der Bauern vor allem darin sucht, dass diese zu sehr ihren eigenen Nutzen gesucht hätten. Gerade in diesem Briefe, dessen Verständnis von einem modernisierenden Standpunkt aus kaum möglich ist, deutet sich eine Stimmung an, die im Gefolge der Niederlage der Bauern eine weite Verbreitung findet und die gekennzeichnet ist durch ein Zurücksinken der revolutionäre Impulse sowie durch eine Abschwächung der sozialen Komponente im Vergleich zu den religiösen Bewusstseinsinhalten . . . ." Bernhard Töpfer, "Review," ZfG, 9 (1961), 2, 281-82.

[122] Zschäbitz, Zur mitteldeutschen Wiedertäuferbewegung, p. 39.

Müntzer's chief objective had been to establish the Kingdom of God on earth, and this had entailed a complete social revolution, for the elect were to inherit the earth and destroy the godless opposed to this Kingdom. Although his conception of the new order had not been clear in all its details, it nevertheless had been clear enough to give expression to the somewhat nebulous aspirations of the lower classes of both town and country who were involved in a class struggle with the feudal nobility. The two groups had been nearly at cross purposes, however, for while Müntzer had aspired to an egalitarian social order for the sake of the Gospel, the mass of his followers aspired to such an order for material reasons. By quoting from Müntzer's letter to the Mühlhausen council, written just shortly before his death, Zschäbitz showed that Müntzer had blamed the failure of the whole enterprise on the selfish aspirations of his followers. As a result of this selfishness, God had not been able to further their cause and had had to punish them through the ruling class.[123]

Despite the fact, however, that Müntzer had been motivated by religious motives and had not anticipated the Marxist revolutionary of the 19th and 20th centuries, he had still been a great revolutionary hero. His religious ideas, applied to the social realm, had worked as a catalyst to bring about armed insurrection against oppression. Through his utopian ideas he had objectified the desires of the downtrodden masses and had spurred them on to realize these ideas. Nor had his recantation nor his letter to the Mühlhausen city council, both of which Zschäbitz accepted as historical evidence, detracted from the stature of this revolutionary. In fact, Müntzer had really made no retractions at all for he only confessed that his followers had sought selfish ends, against which he had warned them time and again. As a result, Müntzer had recognized that God must punish them; he had had no quarrel with this verdict. Thus, rather than having demonstrated cowardice, these documents had really manifested the greatness of this much maligned man.

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[123] Ibid., p. 47.

Bernhard Töpfer, Zschäbitz' Marxist reviewer, however, had the uneasy feeling that perhaps Zschäbitz had not been as specific in his formulation of the Marxist Müntzer-image as he had been in his criticism of Smirin's tendency to modernize Müntzer. The question, what really remained of the Marxist Müntzer if one placed him back into his own century of religious turmoil and social unrest and admitted his primarily religious orientation, seemed to worry Töpfer. It seemed to worry Steinmetz as well, for in his Theses he held fast to Engels' thesis that Müntzer had anticipated the future course of historical events in that he had created an ideology which had anticipated that of Marxism. ". . . His ideology--and that is the decisive point--is not bourgeois but manifested itself as a Vorform of the proletarian class ideology. Müntzer went beyond the confines of his own time and pointed the way to a solution as yet unrealizable but which should prove to be the only correct solution for the future."[124]

But if Steinmetz held fast to the belief that Müntzer's ideology anticipated that of the Marxists, he also added a new dimension to Müntzer's stature: Müntzer became the German national hero who had fought for the unity of the torn German fatherland.[125] In order to portray him as such, however, Steinmetz had once again to stress the fact that Müntzer's teachings had influenced the entire revolutionary movement.[126] But he encountered some difficulty here because in a previous thesis he had accepted Macek's argument for Zwingli's and Gaismaier's influence in the Peasant War in Southern Germany. Macek, as has been noted, had also asserted that Gaismaier's ideology had been a progressive bourgeois ideology where as Müntzer's had attracted only the poor peasants and paupers in the cities. Steinmetz, however, placed both Gaismaier and Müntzer on the same level stating that, ". . . The radical wing stood under the overwhelming influence of Müntzer and Gaismaier, whereby the activity of the latter extended over the Alpine region, while that of Müntzer reached into West, Southwest, and Central Germany . . . ."[127] Yet he was forced to admit that perhaps Gaismaier had been more bürgerlich than Müntzer.[128]

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[124] Steinmetz, "Thesen," ZfG, 8 (1960), 1, 123. But Steinmetz had to modify this statement in the following way: ". . . Bei diesem Programm aber handelt es sich zweifellos um eine keimhaft-unreife, für ihre Zeit letztlich utopische, im ganzen aber doch geniale Antizipation der wahrhaft nationalen Politik der deutschen Arbeiterklasse," p. 124.

[125] "Müntzers, Lehre beeinflusste die revolutionären Bauern und Plebejer im ganzen Aufstandsgebiet; in allen Bauernlagern fanden sich seine Anhänger, die für ein kompromissloses Vorgehen gegen die Feudalherren und 'für die Einheit der zerissenen deutschen Heimat' eintraten . . . ." Ibid., p. 123.

[126] See previous note.

However Steinmetz failed to answer the question in his Theses as to how Müntzer could remain a person motivated by religion who had yet anticipated the Marxist ideology of the future victory of the proletariat.[129] The answer to this question was given in 1962 by Ernst Werner:[130] Müntzer had been the prophet of a new class. Thus

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[127] Ibid., p. 123.

[128] Ibid.

[129] That Steinmetz was reluctant to admit Müntzer's religious motivation is indicated in his complaint that, ". . . die 'Ketzer' wie Müntzer nicht nur in dem bekannten Buch von Nigg, sondern auch bei Hassinger und anderen gleichsam heimgeholt in die Kirche, um sie den Marxisten zu entreissen . . . ." "Probleme der frühbürgerlichen Revolution," Frühbürgerliche Revolution, p. 36.

[130] Ernst Werner, "Messianische Bewegungen im Mittelalter," ZfG,10(1962), 2, 370-96, and 10 (1962), 2, 598-622.

Werner was able to view Müntzer in the context of the religious 16th century but at the same time make him into the warrior of the downtrodden masses he believed God had ordained to inherit the kingdom.[131] Müntzer had, therefore, anticipated an idea for which the masses were not only not ready but which was incapable of realization at the time. The historical dialectic had not been ready for a classless society because it had been time for the beginning of the bourgeois revolution which was to attempt to unify Germany economically and politically. It had been the time of the decay of feudalism and the rise of the bourgeoisie.[132]

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[131] ". . . Das soziale Wesen des Müntzerschen 'Gottesreiches' bekam nunmehr Gestalt. Es sollte ein Gesellschaftszustand sein, in dem keine Klassenunterschiede, kein Privateigentum und keine selbständige, fremde Staatsgewalt mehr existieren. Es war Gottes Wille, dass die Gottlosen ausgerottet und die Gottesherrschaft auf Erden—hic et nunc—verwirklicht würden. Das neue Reich aber manifestierte sich in einer neuen Sozialordnung. Das Volk der Auserwählten musste zum Träger von Gottes Souveränität werden, denn das Volk ist zur Auserwähltheit prädestiniert. Die Armen sind die Träger der Gerechtigkeit, sie sind der Hauptfaktor der Entwicklung. Die Auserwählten setzen sich aus denjenigen zusammen, die fähig sind, zugunsten des Allgemeinen auf die privaten Interessen zu verzichten. Dadurch werden sie in die Lage versetzt, alle Hindernisse auf dem Wege zur wahren Vernunft zu beseitigen. Sie müssen mit allen Mitteln das Volk zum Kampf gegen die Gottlosen organisieren.

"Damit werden die Armen zu den Auserwählten des Herrn. Sie allein können die göttliche Ordnung auf Erden errichten, der sich alle unterwerfen müssen. Sie sind es, die den prophezeiten Umsturz verwirklichen. Die Messiasfunktion, die im Danielbuch dem Volk Israel als kollektiv zugedacht wurde, übertrug Müntzer 'auf jenes konkrete Volk, das während des Bauernkrieges die Reihen des bäuerlich—plebejischen Lagers füllte . . . .'" Ibid., p. 613.

In the process of trying to realize the classless Christian society on earth, however, Müntzer also became the prophet of revolution. The more critical the situation in Thuringia became, the more fanatical became Müntzer's denunciations of the ruling classes. Since, however, Müntzer had been aware that the power at his disposal could not have sufficed to bring about a radical reorganization of social conditions on earth, he had had to rely upon a power outside that of human society. This, Werner believed, had been amply demonstrated by the fact that Müntzer, like Gideon in his day, had departed for Frankenhausen with 300 men to do battle with the enemies of God.[133]

Werner believed that Müntzer had raised himself above other representatives of the Messianic movements precisely because he had recognized that the salvation of mankind would come from a social force, from the poor people, whose prophet and leader he had wanted to be.[134] According to Müntzer, the Kingdom of God was to come into being through the revolutionary initiative of the poor and exist for the poor. The tragedy of Müntzer, however, lay in the fact that he had overrated the power and self-consciousness of those social stratas which seemed to him predestined to accomplish the salvation of mankind.[135]

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[132] *Ibid.*, p. 614.

[133] *Ibid.*

[134] *Ibid.*, p. 615.

Müntzer had, to a certain extent, anticipated the future course of social development without, however, having had any knowledge of the laws of social development. Therefore his teachings had had to remain confined within the boundaries of religious categories. The catastrophy of Frankenhausen had not, however, destroyed the idea of the saving function of the lower classes; it had only demonstrated the fallibility of the religious principle of salvation.[136] This religious principle had proven to be the weak spot in Müntzer's ideological armor. His religious motivation, which could no longer be denied after Zschäbitz' investigation, had demonstrated its inability to initiate social change.[137]

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[135] _Ibid_., p. 616.

[136] _Ibid_.

[137] It is, however, not too clear exactly why the 'religious principle' is made responsible for Müntzer's failure to establish his religious classless society when the historical dialectic would not have allowed it in any case! Here again, the Marxists want both their cake and the enjoyment of eating it.

In his textbook on the frühbürgerliche Revolution, which appeared some five years after his Theses,[138] Steinmetz proceeded to elaborate those proposed theses. Müntzer's most important achievement, he began, had been his new conception of history and the role the masses were to play in the realization of this concept. According to this view, the time had arrived for the overthrow of the established order on earth. The power through which this revolution was to take place he saw in the masses. Their active role in history was to bring about the classless society characterized by the absence of a coercive government.[139]

At first Müntzer had believed this goal could be achieved by peaceful means; revolution would only become necessary in the event that the princes should decline to aid in spreading his teachings. Steinmetz tried to explain away the fact that Müntzer had attempted to woo the princes into supporting his cause by stating that this attempt had not been ". . . a concession to princely rule, for it arose out of the insight that the people were not mature enough for the battle and therefore in danger of doing battle for egotistical reasons. It is true that Müntzer was too optimistic about being able to conclude an 'honest agreement' with the princes, but political reality corrected him . . . ."[140] Since Müntzer had recognized this immaturity in the masses, he had attempted to educate them to see beyond their own selfish desires to the needs of Germany as a whole.[141]

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[138] Max Steinmetz, Deutschland 1476-1648 (Berlin, 1965).

[139] Ibid., p. 120.

If Müntzer had been portrayed as a proto-communist by Engels and as the great Volksreformator by Smirin who had allowed his communistic tendencies to fade momentarily into the background, Steinmetz now changed the emphasis even more. The Slavic and German discussions concerning the nature of the frühbürgerliche Revolution in 16th-century Germany had made it only too painfully obvious that one had to stretch the imagination somewhat to be able to speak of a bourgeois revolution without a bourgeoisie, to use Epstein's terminology. Smirin's attempt to make Müntzer into a Volksreformator still had not gone far enough because the full extent of the problem only became apparent during the course of the discussion. Without a bourgeois element in his following, Müntzer still had not entered the central historical stream of his time: he still remained outside the realm of the bourgeois revolution even if he had been the great Volksreformator. Somehow, therefore, Müntzer had to be portrayed as having won some kind of a bourgeois following.

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[140] Ibid., p. 121.

[141] Ibid.

Like Smirin, Steinmetz too asserted that Müntzer had realized that the Reformation era had in reality been only a period of transition to the classless society, not the period of its inauguration. This realization had come to him through his observation of the political events of his day. As a result, Müntzer had allowed his social ideal of a classless society to retreat into the background momentarily so that he might unite the various oppositional elements,[142] not merely the peasant-plebian wing as Smirin had claimed, in order to achieve at least that for which history had been ripe: the abolition of princely rule and the destruction of feudalism. Consequently, he had also modified his political program in order to give expression to the radical bourgeois-democratic demands of his time. Primitive communistic demands had been totally lacking in these programs.[143]

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[142] ". . . War bisher der ausgebeutete Bauer das Synonym für das unterdrückte Volk schlechthin, nun würde er für Müntzer zum Vertreter eines sozialen Standes, den man für ein Zusammengehen mit den oppositionellen bürgerlichen Kräften und den plebejischen Schichten gewinnen musste. So formte sich bereits jetzt, endgültig in Mühlhausen und während der Wanderung nach Südwestdeutschland, Müntzers Erkenntnis von der Notwendigkeit der Vereinigung verschiedener sozialer Kräfte im Kampf heraus, eine Erkenntnis, die für den praktischen revolutionären Kampf von ausserordentlicher Bedeutung sein sollte." Ibid., p. 122.

Another reason for toning down the communistic tendencies in Müntzer's thought was to make it easier for Steinmetz to extend the former's influence into the regions of the Peasant War outside of Thuringia, for, as Smirin had already realized, the communistic ideas espoused by Müntzer had not found much of an echo amongst the peasants. If this were so, and Müntzer made to espouse radical communistic aims, then Müntzer's influence in other parts of Germany could not have been very great. But Steinmetz once again chose to propound the Zimmermann-Engels thesis of Müntzer's influence in all parts of the Peasant War because he wanted to make Müntzer into the German national hero who had tried to unify a badly splintered fatherland.[144] As a result, Mühlhausen once again became the center of revolutionary activity in Germany from which Müntzer had tried to stir the whole country to revolt.[145]

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[143] "Im Zusammenhang damit musste Müntzer seine Auffassung vom sofortigen Übergang zu einem vollendeten Gesellschaftszustand aufgeben. Zunächst galt es, das Haupthindernis für die friedliche Ausbreitung des Evangeliums, die Herrschaft der Fürsten und Tyrannen zu beseitigen. Im bevorstehenden Kampf konnte Müntzer deshalb nur eine Übergangsperiode sehen. Tatsächlich besitzen alle von der Müntzer-Partei hervorgebrachten Programme radikal-bürgerliche, demokratischen Charakter. Primitive-kommunistische Forderungen fehlen völlig." Ibid., p. 123. See also p. 142.

[144] See note 125 above.

The revolt had begun in Southern Germany near the Swiss border and Steinmetz was therefore concerned to demonstrate that Müntzer had decisively influenced the early stages of the revolution in this region. The latter's brief visit to this region in the Fall of 1524 was therefore portrayed as the decisive event in the initiation of revolution.[146] Müntzer was further pictured as having won many disciples on this visit; even Balthasar Hubmaier and Hans Müller von Bulgenbach, the leader of the Stühlinger peasants, had been persuaded by Müntzer's revolutionary logic.[147] Besides these adherents in the southern theater of the revolt, Müntzer had also won an adherent in Jakob Wehe, the leader of the Leipheimer peasants, and numerous others in the Thuringian theater. But beyond that, Müntzer had maintained contact with the insurgents in Fulda, and since these had had contacts with Hessen, Würzburg, Bildhausen, and even distant Deiningen, it was apparent that Müntzer's supporters had aimed at a working agreement with the insurgents in the various regions of Germany from the very beginning.[148]

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[145] ". . . Lediglich Müntzer und seine Anhänger warben unablässig für die Vereinigung der revolutionären Kräfte in grossen Teilen Deutschlands, bemühten sich um eine Zentralisierung der antifeudalen Bewegung und schufen in Thüringen das mögliche Zentrum des deutschen Bauernkrieges . . . ." Ibid., p. 127.

[146] ". . . Mit grosser Wahrscheinlichkeit erwuchsen die Gedanken des christlichen Bundes und des weltlichen Banns sowie die Schlösserartikel aus dem ausserordentlichen Einflus, den Thomas Müntzer während seines Aufenthaltes 1524 in Südwestdeutschland auf Hubmaier und den beginnenden Aufstand ausgeübt hatte." Ibid., p. 130. Also: "Wichtiger aber und nachhaltiger als die Gespräche mit diesem Zwingli nahestehenden Basler Reformator Oecolampadius wurden die Verbindungen mit den aufständischen Bauern im Klettgau und Hegau. Hier wirkten Müntzers Gedanken während des Bauernkrieges weiter getragen von vielen neuen Anhänger, unter denen Balthasar Hubmaier hervorragte . . . ," p. 124. And again: "Die neue Kampflosung verbreitete sich schnell und wurde besonders im Klettgau gefördert, wo Müntzer im Winter wochenlang gewirkt hatte. Als das Jahr 1524 zu Ende ging, war das gesamte Gebiet zwischen Donau, Rhein und Lech in Gärung begriffen. Das erste Zentrum der allgemeinen Beuernerhebung nahm Gestalt an."

Steinmetz divided the entire peasant movement into two main wings: a radical wing and a more conservative one inclined toward compromise with the existing ruling powers. The radical wing, with the Artikelbrief as its declaration of aims, was also brought within the orbit of Müntzer's influence by Steinmetz through his assertion that this same Artikelbrief owed its radical nature to the inspiration of Müntzer.[149] Thus, by stating that Müntzer's utopian ideals had faded into the background more and more as the conflict drew nearer and had been replaced by radical bourgeois-democratic demands, and by asserting that the declaration of aims of the radical wing of the movement had been inspired by Müntzer, Steinmetz could move Müntzer's influence into every region where more radical demands had been made by the peasants than were contained in the Twelve Articles.

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[147] Ibid., p. 130.

[148] Ibid., p. 140.

Even in Thuringia, where Müntzer and his followers had formed the core of the revolutionary conspiracy, the aims had remained those of the Artikelbrief. Not only, however, were Müntzer's communistic tendencies toned down to make it possible for Steinmetz to extend Müntzer's influence, his revolutionary élan was also de-emphasized and Müntzer made to advocate change by peaceful means.

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[149] "Die Verfasser dieses historischen Dokuments [Artikelbrief] wollten den neuen Gesellschaftszustand möglichts ohne Blutvergiessen und Schwertschlag herbeiführen, ganz so wie Thomas Müntzer—der offensichtlich zu ihren Inspiratoren zählte—, in Allstedt und auch später während des Thüringer Aufstandes das radikale Programm auf möglichst friedlichem Wege durchzusetzen versuchte." Ibid., p. 134.

But this was only another attempt to extend Müntzer's influence into the less radical wings of the peasant movement.[150]

Müntzer's role in the Thuringian theater of the Peasant War was also the central theme of the latest study on Thomas Müntzer.[151] Bensing, whose book was preceded by a number of particular studies on various aspects of Müntzer's life,[152] once more repeated the Marxist commonplaces concerning Engels' interpretation of Müntzer.[153]

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[150] "Hervorstechend ist das Bemühen, ein recht umfassendes, bis in die Reihen der städtischen Ehrbarkeit und des Adels reichendes Bündnis zu schaffen. Bei freiwilliger Unterwerfung unter den Willen des Volkes billigte Müntzer weitgehende soziale Zugeständnisse. Diese Taktik zeigt, dass er als vordringliche Aufgabe die politische Entmachtung der Fürsten und Herren betrachtete, um—wie er glaubte—den Weg für die weiter friedliche Umgestaltung des gesellschaftlichen Lebens freizulegen. _Dieser Grundsatz macht die grosse Resonanz des Müntzerschen Programms bei den verschiedenen sozialen Schichten verständlich und verlieh dem Wirken Müntzers und seiner Anhänger radikal-demokratische Züge_ [my italics]. Utopisch-kommunistische Forderungen treten während des Aufstandes völlig zurück. Wo sie sich in den Verhören der Müntzeranhänger finden, spiegeln sie allein den ernsthaften Vorsatz wider, nach dem Sieg über die weltliche und geistige Obrigkeit zum antizipierten vollendeten Gesellschaftszustand weiterzuschreiten . . . ." _Ibid._, p. 142. This stands in direct contradiction to Engels' position. See Engels, "Bauernkrieg," M/E, _Werke_, VII, 401-402, where Müntzer _is_ the representative of the lower classes and attempts to realize his communistic aims in the Peasant War.

[151] Manfred Bensing, _Thomas Müntzer und der Thüringer Aufstand 1525_ (Berlin, 1966). The book grew out of Bensing's 1962 dissertation which, together with Bensing's other articles, was used by Steinmetz and explains the latter's interpretation to some degree. See Bensing's own statement on p. 11.

In dependence upon Ernst Werner,[154] Bensing saw Müntzer's teachings and activity from two aspects: from the religious frame of reference but also from his social-revolutionary activity. Thus, Müntzer was portrayed as the messianic prophet of a future class as well as the social revolutionary who had believed the common man to be the executor of God's will on earth. Basing his philosophy of history on the Book of Daniel, Müntzer had developed a theory of the imminent transformation of the world. At the same time, Bensing continued, Müntzer had seen ". . . In the 'present Christendom,' in God's chosen people, in the 'poor laity and peasants . . . ,'"[155] the means by which God would change the existing social order.

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[152] For a list of these see ibid., pp. 271-72.

[153] Ibid., p. 44.

[154] Ibid., p. 45.

To this historical role Müntzer had to educate the masses, however, for they had as yet not been ready for the role they were to play, nor had they even realized what role they were to play. Thus Müntzer's activity to the summer of 1524 had been directed toward educating the masses for this role.[156]

At first Müntzer had hoped that his new social order would be inaugurated peacefully and to this end he had wooed the princes into his *Bund*. This had not been a concession to princely absolutism, however, Bensing hastened to add, nor had Müntzer merely wanted to become another Daniel who advised princes. Müntzer had only been prepared to tolerate a friendly working partnership between the princes and the people and to allow the princes their privileges until the people had been sufficiently educated for their role and could be entrusted with self-government. At that point the princes would be gently stripped of their power.[157]

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[155] *Ibid*., p. 47. In order to make Müntzer the messianic prophet of a future class, the Marxists are forced to equate, as Bensing does here, 'God's chosen people,' and the 'poor laity and peasants.' On p. 51, Bensing came back to the problem: "Differenzierte soziale Vorstellungen schlossen zunächst auch die Prinzipien aus, nach denen Müntzer die Menschen seiner Zeit klassefizierte, die bekannte Unterteilung in 'Auserwählte' und 'Verdammte.' Zu ersteren rechnete Müntzer alle jene, deren Herz sich dem legendigen Geiste Gottes aufzuschliessen bereit war, *in erster Linie das niedere Volk* [my italics] für das es keine *unüberwindlichen* Hindernisse für die Erkenntnis der Wahrheit und die Unterordnung unter die Interessen des Ganzen geben konnte. Die Verdammten, die Gottlosen aber wurden nach Müntzer durch ihre Begierden, durch das Streben nach Reichtum, Titel und Wohlleben daran gehindert, dass der lebendige Gott mit seinem Finger die Wahrheit in ihre Herzen schrieb." Bensing failed to point out, however, that Müntzer did not consider riches, titles, etc., *unüberwindliche* obstacles, although it made hearing God's voice more difficult.

[156] *Ibid*., p. 53.

With the increasing hostility between the various classes, however, Müntzer began to change his views about the princes and the role they were to play in his future society. Because they misused the sword, Müntzer concluded that it was God's will that this sword should be taken from them and given to the lower classes. This changed view of the function of the princes brought with it a radical change in Müntzer's plans as well. Before, he had tried to educate the masses for their role, now, however, he decided that society had first to be changed before the new church could be established which would manifest in its members the human characteristics Müntzer was seeking.[158]

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[157] Ibid., p. 54.

[158] Ibid., p. 57.

The increasing hostility between the classes, however, convinced Müntzer that the coming struggle could only be a prelude to the establishment of the classless society he had vaguely envisioned. With this realization came a concomitant modification of his socio-political aims which now took the form of a radical democratic program and corresponded with the historically possible at the time.[159] In order to realize this program, Müntzer broadened the social base of his support to include peasants, plebians, and the progressive bourgeoisie.[160]

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[159] A large part of Bensing's study is rationalization as becomes obvious in the above example. According to Marxist theory, the 16th century was the period of the frühbürgerliche Revolution. If, therefore, Müntzer is to be portrayed as the German national hero he must be portrayed as a man who recognized the historical need of his time and who fought for the realization of aims which could be realized at the time, and not for visionary utopistic aims of a religious nature.

[160] Ibid., p. 61. This is in contrast to Marx and Engels, who, on the basis of Müntzer's communistic ideas, had blamed the latter's failure on the fact that the historical dialectic had not been ripe for these ideas. Here, however, Müntzer was made to represent radical democratic ideas at the height of the conflict, so Marx and Engels' argument could no longer apply. But now Müntzer could be portrayed as the revolutionary who had indeed recognized that the time had not been ripe for the classless communistic society and had modified his aims to coincide with the requirements of the time. This could only enhance Müntzer's image, for in spite of this change, he still remained the prophet of a future class.

Müntzer had calculated correctly, for precisely this modification of his socio-political aims to meet the needs of the time explained his popular appeal and leadership especially in the Thuringian revolt. In Mühlhausen Müntzer had tried to realize these plans by organizing his supporters in the various surrounding districts. These organizations[161] had been constituted by members from various social groups, each of whose aims and interests had coincided only partially with those of Müntzer. It was precisely because Müntzer's ideology had not given expression to the desires of any one class that had enabled it to spread so quickly.[162]

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[161] Bensing uses Engels' term, *Partei-Müntzers*, but he modifies it in the following manner: "Friedrich Engels hat den Begriff 'Partei-Müntzers' in die Geschichtswissenschaft eingeführt . . . Nun ist nicht von der Hand zu weisen, dass die Rückprojizierung von geschichtlichen Sachverhalten auf vorausgegangene Perioden stets die *Gefahr* [my italics] ungerechtfertigter Modernisierung in sich birgt. So gehört auch der Terminus 'Partei-Müntzers' keineswegs dem Sprachgebrauch des 16. Jahrhunderts an . . . ." *Ibid*., p. 132. Obviously, however, Engels had not fallen prey to this error, for Bensing proceeded to demonstrate why it should be used.

[162] *Ibid*., pp. 132-33. Engels, however, as we have seen, had said of Müntzer: ". . . Luther *and* Müntzer *each* [my italics] represent[ed] their party completely in their doctrine, character and actions." M/E, *Werke*, VII, 347. This stands in marked contrast to Bensing's further statement that, ". . . Das war ein Hauptgrund, weshalb Friedrich Engels Müntzer gegenüber Luther, der stets nur die Forderungen und Wünsche der 'Majorität seiner Klasse' ausgesprochen habe, hervorhob, weil Müntzer über die unmittelbaren Wünsche und Forderungen des Volkes hinausgegangen sei . . . ." Bensing, *Thomas Müntzer*, p. 133.

Although Bensing tried to portray Müntzer as a man who had read the 'signs of the time' aright, and although he paid lip service to the criticism that Engels had unduly modernized Müntzer,[163] he proceeded to do the very same. Zschäbitz had asserted that Müntzer had indeed been a religious man and a child of his time, but he had been followed by Ernst Werner who had again pointed the way in which Müntzer could be brought back into the Marxist fold. Therefore, Bensing could once more state that Müntzer's teachings had indeed contained historically new aspects: it had pointed prophetically to nearly all the major issues that were to become acute in the succeeding centuries.[164] But in the 16th century this had been possible only through the association with the ideas of messianic prophecy, Old Testament prophecy, or the chiliastic spiritualism of early Christianity.[165]

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[163] See above, note 161.

[164] Bensing, Thomas Müntzer, p. 133.

Precisely because Müntzer's program had gone beyond the demands of the pre- or early proletarian groups, who, incidentally, had not shared this prophetic look into the future and had fought for very real present temporal interests,[166] it had been the only program which could have, and in reality attempted to centralize and coördinate the revolt in Germany.[167] This program contained three main aspects: (1) a kind of maximum program which contained the much debated omnia sunt communia, but which played very little part in the actual struggle; (2) a kind of minimum program for the present period of transition which aimed at giving political power to the common people, but which was also willing to reach a compromise agreement with those princes who would join the Bund; and lastly (3) a tactical aspect which envisaged the establishment of the new order without recourse to the sword.[168]

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[165] This is a typical mode of Marxist argumentation. Such terms as *zwangsläufig*, *notwendig*, etc., indicate their deterministic argumentation. Because something in fact happened the way it did, it could not have happened otherwise. In this respect it is interesting to note, however, that Zimmermann, and consequently also Engels, had portrayed Müntzer as having freed himself from the religious bonds in which the 16th century had found itself. For Engels, therefore, it had *not been necessary* for Müntzer to adhere to these religious forms. Why should it then become *necessary* for Bensing? The answer is only too obvious: because they have had to admit Müntzer's religious motivation they now state that it could not have been otherwise in the 16th century. But this in no way *explains* the phenomenon.

[166] This, then, explains Müntzer's accusation against his followers, expressed in his last letter to the citizens of Mühlhausen, that they had lost the fight because they had sought their own selfish desires and not the establishment of the Kingdom of God. See *ibid*., p. 232.

The problem that faced Bensing with regard to Müntzer's involvement in the Thuringian phase of the Peasant War was the following: if Müntzer's social and political program had indeed been in accord with what was historically possible at the time, how did one explain his defeat? Despite the fact, answered Bensing, that

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[167] Ibid., p. 135.

[168] Ibid., pp. 138-39. Bensing turned against the opinion of his Marxist colleague who had made Müntzer's communistic ideas responsible for the alienation of the bourgeois from the revolutionary movement with the following argument: ". . . Dem kann nicht zugestimmt werden. Nach der Aufspaltung der einheitlichen Antirom-Bewegung 1521/22 bestand keine Möglichkeit mehr, die revolutionäre Gesamtbewegung unter Parolen fortzusetzen, die gleichzeitig vom Besitzbürgertum und von den Volksmassen akzeptiert werden konnten . . . ," p. 140. Bensing does not state why, however.

Müntzer had had his followers in the various districts and cities around Mühlhausen who had adhered to his radical democratic aims, there had existed a strong moderate wing within the Thuringian revolutionary movement. As long, however, as the radical wing had made steady progress, the moderate wing had not really been able to assert its power. But as soon as the radical wing suffered the slightest defeat, the moderate wing immediately asserted itself.[169] Thus a conflict had arisen in the revolutionary camp which had destroyed its unity.[170] This same conflict was mirrored on a smaller scale in the conflict between Pfeiffer and Müntzer.[171]

Yet this was not the real cause of failure as far as Bensing was concerned. Bensing tried to soften the impact of this question by arguing further that one could not judge Müntzer merely by what he had achieved, one had rather to judge him by what he had aimed at.[172] This argument was necessary because although Bensing asserted that Müntzer had adjusted his teachings to coincide with the historically possible, the historically possible had not taken place because of the Lokalborniertheit of those involved in the revolt.[173] Müntzer had won a large following, but in the decisive moments this following left him in the lurch.[174] Müntzer had been a great man who had expounded an ideology which had mirrored the social conditions that had fitted into the historical dialectic, but despite all this he had failed. What then was the decisive cause?

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[169] This argument is based on Engels, not on the situation pertaining in Thuringia. See _ibid_., p. 164.

[170] _Ibid_. See Bensing's summation on p. 173.

[171] _Ibid_., pp. 183-88. Pfeiffer's decision to go his own way is, of course, termed ". . . Verrat an Müntzer . . . ," p. 182.

Luther had seen Frankenhausen as God's judgment on Müntzer, but even Müntzer himself had looked upon his defeat at Frankenhausen as a judgment of God. As a result, he had turned his back on revolution in his letter to the citizens of Mühlhausen. In the same letter Müntzer had blamed the participants in the struggle for having sought their own interests, thus, in essence, placing the blame upon those 'poor people' whom, according to Bensing, he had formerly seen as the saviors of mankind. Obviously, Müntzer had become disillusioned in the principle of salvation through these same 'poor people.' Yet Bensing chose to reason that the decision at Frankenhausen had not signified a defeat of the idea of the ". . . saving function of the masses, of the poor people . . . ,"[175] rather it had demonstrated the fallibility of the religious principle of salvation.[176] Müntzer had expected too much of the common man with his ethical-religious imperative. In the period of declining feudalism 'egoism,' not 'sacrifice,' had been the necessary means by which one had to assert oneself. But, of course, Müntzer had not been able to recognize that this egoism had not been a consequence of mankind's subjective corruption for it had arisen out of the as yet 'unripe' social conditions.[177] Thus Müntzer had not really read his time aright, for he had read it through religious eyes, yet precisely religion had been proven wanting at Frankenhausen. Religion, therefore, became the tragic flaw in Müntzer's ideological armor.

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[172] For example: ". . . Auf der Grundlage ihrer in sich geschlossenen, weit über das historisch Mögliche hinausreichenden Lehre und Programmatik vermochte sie diese Entschiedenheit des Kampfes mit dem Streben nach Zentralisation der Bewegung über weite Gebiete Deutschlands hin zu vereinen. Die Bedeutung dieser Tatsache wird durch die Unmöglichkeit, eine solche Zentralisation auch wirklich zu erreichen, nicht verkleinert, sondern nur noch hervorgehoben . . . ." Ibid., p. 135.

[173] This is also Engels' argument. Ibid., p. 194.

[174] ". . . Thomas Müntzer war hervorragend gebildet; er verfügte über die Fähigkeit, schnell Menschen um sich zu scharen, ihr Vertrauen zu gewinnen und auf sie zu wirken . . . ." Ibid., p. 136.

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[175] Ibid., p. 233.

[176] Ibid., p. 234, in dependence upon Ernst Werner.

[177] The crucial aspect of the interpretation comes to the fore here: Müntzer had not been able to recognize what really motivated man's actions. Hence, he had placed the blame in the wrong place. But Bensing should have reasoned a little farther. If the only means by which the 'historically possible' could have been achieved at the time had been through egoism, for according to Bensing this had been the 'form' demanded by the contemporary social conditions, then Müntzer's teachings had not really given expression to these social conditions nor coincided with the 'historically possible.' What is more, it would indicate that Müntzer was not really concerned with the 'class war,' but rather used it to fight his 'holy war.'

What then is one to say of Müntzer? Has the category at last been found into which he fits? Was he a proto-communist? Did he really envisage the ultimate victory of the proletariat and for that reason fight their cause? Was his communism a real communism at all? Did his ideas really point into the future? Was he essentially an atheist as Engels believed, or was he the messianic prophet of a future class who had modified this prophecy in order to meet the needs of history and a social revolution?

Engels' view that Müntzer had essentially been an atheist rested, as he himself admitted, on the 'findings' of Zimmermann. But Zimmermann, as was noted in Chapter IV, had bent the truth rather badly in order to make a rational Deist of Müntzer.[178] He had relied upon Sebastian Franck's account of Müntzer's teachings for his evidence concerning the latter's beliefs. Franck, however, who had himself been not a little influenced by Thomas Müntzer[179] and the spiritualistic ideas of his day, knew very well what he meant when he spoke of Müntzer's 'inner voice.'[180] But precisely this 'inner voice' became man's rational faculty in Zimmermann's historical workshop. Zimmermann's reinterpretation, however, was not merely a misinterpretation; it rested on a conscious falsification.

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[178] It should be pointed out here that Deists such as Zimmermann were perhaps not so wrong in seeing a similarity between themselves and Müntzer particularly with regard to the 'inner voice,' for the concept of this 'inner voice,' as Karl Holl has pointed out, could very easily become the 'divine spark' of reason in man once it had become devoid of its religious connotations. "Oder konnte man—gemäss dem alten Lieblingswort der Mystik von dem Licht, das jeden Menschen erleuchtet, der in diese Welt kommt,—die Anknüpfung für das innere Wort in dem ursprünglichen Wesen des Menschen suchen. Dann fiel es zusammen mit dem Höheren, Geistigen, das verborgen, nur durch das Fleisch zugedeckt, in jedem Menschen schlummerte; mochte man dieses Höhere nun Gesetz, Sohn, Füncklein, Sinn, Gespür, Same oder wie anders nennen. Die offenbarung war nur derjenige Augenblick, wo dieses Innerlichste, Göttliche im Menschen aufgeweckt wurde und ihm selbst zum Bewusstsein kam. Aber dann drohte das innere Wort in das 'Vernünftige' oder das Gewissen überzugehen; es wankte zugleich die von den Täufern zumeist noch festgehaltene Lehre von der Erbsünde—war das Innerste im Menschen göttlich und gut, wie konnte man ihn dann noch als von Grund aus verderbt bezeichnen?—und, was das wichtigste war, die Übernatürlichkeit des inneren Worts liess sich nur mittels des pantheistischen Gedankens festhalten, dass Gott allenthalben in der Welt da sei und wirke, im Baumblatt so gut wie im Herzen der Menschen." Karl Holl, "Luther und die Schwärmer," Gesammelte Schriften, vol. I (Tübingen, 1932), 437-38.

[179] See Thomas Nipperdey, "Theologie und Revolution bei Thomas Müntzer," ARG, 54 (1963), 145.

This falsification was welcomed by Engels because it made Müntzer into a rational social revolutionary, and when this was combined with the latter's communistic tendencies, it made him appear to be a precursor of modern atheistic communism. But it was precisely this religious element in Müntzer's thought which Kautsky and Bax felt compelled to replace and which Engels tacitly agreed to in his last letter to Kautsky. Smirin, however, in strict dependence upon Engels, turned against Kautsky and, by 'proving' Engels' theory, also 'proved' Zimmermann's consciously falsified theory of Müntzer as the rational social revolutionary. But although Smirin was profuse in his argumentation, his Marxist colleagues have not been able to follow him in denying Müntzer's religious sincerity. Zschäbitz was the first to revise Engels' and Zimmermann's thesis after the return to Marxist orthodoxy by Smirin, and although he has been criticized by some of his colleagues, his thesis of the religious sincerity of

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[180] For a discussion of the problem of the 'inner voice' in the theology of Thomas Müntzer, see ibid., pp. 145-58, and also E. Gordon Rupp, "Thomas Müntzer, Hans Huth and the 'Gospel of all Creatures,'" Bulletin of the John Rylands Library, 43 (1960-61), 492-93.

Müntzer has not again been denied.[181] Indeed, had Zimmermann been more honest and had he read more of Müntzer's major writings, he must also have become convinced of the latter's religious sincerity.

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[181] Already Karl Holl, "Luther und die Schwärmer," 1922, turned against the Marxist thesis and stressed Müntzer's religious motivation. ". . . An der Aufrichtigkeit seiner [Müntzer's] religiösen Überzeugungen darf von vornherein kein Zweifel walten. Wenn bei irgendeinem Mann dieser Richtung, so gewinnt man bei ihm den Eindruck, dass das, was er vorträgt, aus wirklichem inneren Erleben geschöpft ist . . . ." Gesammelte Schriften, p. 425. Heinrich Böhmer, "Thomas Müntzer und das jüngste Deutschland," Gesammelte Aufsätze (Gotha, 1927), came to the same conclusion in his criticism of Marxist interpretations of Müntzer, p. 204. Thomas Nipperdey, "Theologie und Revolution bei Thomas Müntzer," even stated: "Ausgangspunkt für ein angemessenes Verständnis Müntzers ist sein theologisches Grundproblem, das heisst sein Verhältnis zu Luther. Müntzer ist nicht, wie häufig behauptet worden ist, zeitweiliger Mitläufer Luthers, der im Grunde der Welt spätmittelalterlicher Sekten und der Mystik angehört, sondern er nimmt Luthers reformatorischen Ansatz durchaus auf . . . ," p. 148.

It must be pointed out here, however, that although contemporary Marxist scholars have admitted Müntzer's religious sincerity, they have made this very sincerity the fatal flaw in his intellectual armor. His religious perspective had kept him from realizing that his ethical-religious principles had required too much of the people: it had kept him from seeing that the social and economic conditions of his day had forced the people to be egoistic, for egoism had been a basic characteristic of capitalistic society.

It is interesting to note, therefore, that this turnabout in Marxist historiography with regard to Müntzer's religious sincerity has also changed their argumentation regarding the causes for his failure. Engels had placed the cause for failure in Müntzer's misjudgment of the historical dialectic. Once his religious sincerity had been granted, however, it was argued that the anticipation of the classless society had been possible in the 16th century only in certain categories of this religious thought. But Müntzer's defeat at Frankenhausen had demonstrated the fallibility of the religious principle of salvation for it had shown the impossibility of achieving a classless society on the basis of religious principles.

Müntzer's aim had been correct, but he had not been able to realize it because of the religious error of his century.[182]

If we grant Müntzer's religious sincerity, is there any truth in the statement that Müntzer harbored communistic ideas? Communistic ideas drawn from the Bible were, of course, not strange to Medieval society. The organization of the monasteries was to a large extent based on these ideas. The Hussite movement, and particularly the Taborite wing of that movement, harbored these ideas.[183] The fact that

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[182] This argument makes clear once again the basic differences in the Christian and Marxist concept of man. Müntzer, the 16th-century Christian revolutionary, had blamed the people's egoism for the failure of the revolt. The people had not pursued God's aims but their own selfish ones. The Marxists, especially Bensing, have rejected even Müntzer's judgment in this case. The egoism of the people was a necessary expression of the social and economic situation of the time. Therefore the people had not failed as Müntzer, the Christian, had maintained, but the failure had much rather demonstrated the fallibility of the religious principle of salvation. But this argument of Bensing's reacts on his previous argument that Müntzer had adjusted his aims to the historical possibility of his time. If Müntzer had in fact done this, then he should also have accepted the fact that these aims could have been achieved only on the basis of the people's egoistic desires. This, however, he obviously had rejected. Thus even if Müntzer had adjusted his aims to meet the requirements of the historical dialectic, these aims could still not have been achieved according to Bensing.

[183] See Norman Cohn, In Pursuit of the Millenium (New Jersey, 1957), pp. 217-36.

Müntzer went to Bohemia in 1521 and issued his famous Manifesto,[184] thus identifying himself with the whole Hussite movement and trying to portray himself as its new leader, shows that he was strongly influenced by these ideas, as the Zwickau Prophets had also been.[185] Thus the communistic idea was not a new one, as Kautsky demonstrated; and there seems to be no reason, therefore, to discount Müntzer's confession that ". . . all things should be in common, and everybody should be supplied according to his need."[186]

Lydia Müller believed that it was from Müntzer and his disciple, Hans Hut, that the Hutterites had received their ideas of a community of goods in the fellowship of believers.[187] Carl Hinrichs, in his penetrating study, Luther und Müntzer,[188] believed that this idea of a community of goods in the fellowship of believers, Müntzer's Bund, had indeed been an integral part of the latter's thought.[189] Thus Müntzer's confession at his trial that omnia sunt communia was only a logical expression of his thought and not something he uttered under torture.[190] But this was a community of goods based on the biblical example found in the Book of Acts.[191] Only in a society in which a community of goods existed could men live together in brotherhood and love and thus create the conditions necessary for the revival of that purity which had existed in the Apostolic Church and which was a necessary pre-condition for the establishment of the Kingdom of

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[184] Reprinted in Brandt, Leben und Schriften, p. 38ff.

[185] Cohn, Millenium, p. 252, feels the Taborite influence was decisive for both Storch and Müntzer who were both in Bohemia at one time or another. See also Paul Wappler, Thomas Müntzer in Zwickau und die Zwickauer Propheten, 2nd ed. (Gütersloh, 1966), pp. 29-30.

[186] George Forell, "Thomas Müntzer, Symbol and Reality," Dialog Reprint, II (Winter issue, 1960), p. 11. Müntzer may also have been influenced in his communistic thinking by Plato's Republic which he had read. See "Ausgedrückte Entblössung," Politische Schriften, p. 42.

[187] Lydia Müller, Der Kommunismus der Mährischen Wiedertäufer (Leipzig, 1927), pp. 74-76.

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[188] Carl Hinrichs, Luther und Müntzer (Berlin, 1952).

[189] Ibid., p. 20. "In diesem Bund der in gleichem Glauben verbundenen Auserwählten kann nur völlige Gleichheit und Gütergemeinschaft herrschen, eine Brüderlichkeit die Reiche und Bedürftige nicht nebeneinander duldet . . . ."

[190] Ibid.

[191] Even Melanchthon stated in his "Die Historia Thomä Müntzers, des Anfängers der Thüringischen Aufruhr, sehr nützlich zu lesen," ". . . Er lehrte auch, dass alle Güter gemein sein, wie in Actis Apostolorum geschrieben steht, dass sie die Güter zusammengethan haben . . . ." Luther, Sämtliche Schriften, XVI (St. Louis, Mo., 1899), 164.

God's elect here on earth.[192] Thus it was not primarily a new social order that Müntzer desired, but rather a new church which needed this social order to be able to come into being.

This new social order, so necessary for the church, had, however, implications which were truly revolutionary for the society of Müntzer's days. Müntzer divided society into two camps: the elect and the godless. The elect were those who had taken the oath to accept and follow the precepts of the Word of God and had thus joined Müntzer's Bund;[193] the godless were those who actively opposed it. No one, however, was to be barred from this Bund because of his class, but if a prince should join, he was to be considered equal to the rest of the members.[194] The princes who refused to join the assembly of the elect and actively opposed it were to be exterminated,[195] for as long as the princes ruled over the people as they did, suppressing and tyrannizing them and thus keeping them from realizing

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[192] Hinrichs, Luther und Müntzer, p. 21. According to Müntzer, riches and honor were the greatest deterents to faith: ". . . Ir kuͤnnet nit Gott und den reychthumern dienen / Wer dieselbigen ehr vnd gütter zum besitzer nimpt / der můss zů letzt ewig von Gott leer gelassen werden / wie am 5. Psalm Got sagt / Ir hertz ist eyttel / vnd daruͤber muͤssen die gewaltigen / eygensinnigen / vnglaubigen menschen vom stůl gestossen werden / darumb / das sie den heyligen warhafftigen Christenglauben in jn / vnd in der gantzen welt verhindern / so er will mit allem seynem warhafftigen vrsprung auffgeben." ^ "Ausgedrückte Entblössung des falschen Glaubens," Carl Hinrichs, hrsq., Thomas Müntzer, Politische Schriften (Halle / Saale, 1950), p. 38.

[193] Hinrichs, Luther und Müntzer, p. 21.

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[194] Hans Zeiss, Schösser in Allstedt, wrote to the Elector Frederick of Saxony, May 7, 1525: "Sie haben zu sich in ihrem Bund bracht den Graffen von Schwartzpurg, Graff Ernsten von Honsteyn. Man sagt, der von Stolberg hab auch zu in schweren mussen, alle Beschwernus abzutun und bei inen und dem Evangeli zu sthen. Mussen alle zu Fuss zu in abdreten und sich irer Wirde und Titel eussern und allein Bruder heissen lassen." Günther Franz, *Quellen zur Geschichte des Bauernkrieges*, vol. II (Darmstadt, 1963), 516. See also Zeiss to Christoph Meinhart of May 5, 1525. *Ibid*., p. 512.

[195] Müntzer to the Duke of Mansfeld, May 12, 1525: "Ich Thomas Müntzer, etwan Pfarher zu Alstet, vormane dich zum ubirflussigen Anregen, das du umb des lebendigen Gottes Nahmen willen deines tirannischen Wutens wollest mussick sein und nicht lenger den Grim Gottis uber dich erbittern. Du hast die Christen angefangen zu martern, du hast die Christen undirstanden zu vertilgen . . . Wirdestu aussen bleiben und dich aufgelegter Sache nicht entledigen, so wil ichs ausschreien vor aller Welt, das all Bruder ir Blut getrost sollen wagen wie etwan widder den Turken . . . ." *Ibid*., pp. 519-20. That these last threatening letters are not *Übersteigerungen* as some Marxists would have it, but represent integral aspects of Müntzer's thoughts, is shown by the following parallel passages from (1) his "Fürstenpredigt": ". . . Drumb lasset die vbeltheter nit lenger leben / die vnns vonn Gott ab wenden. Deut. 13. Dann ein gottloser mensch hat kein recht zcu leben wo er die frumen vorhindert . . . ." *Politische Schriften*, p. 24; and (2) his last pamphlet, "Hochverurschte Schutzrede": ". . . Auff dass der ernnst des vatters die gottlossen Christen / auss dem wege rawme / die der haylbaren lere Christi widerstreben / auff das die gerechten weil vnd raum haben mögen / gottes willen zu lernen . . . ." *Ibid*., p. 83.

God's calling and the working of the Holy Spirit in their lives, the Kingdom of God would not be realized on earth.[196] If the princes joined, they were to use their swords to promote the new society by destroying the godless, but they might even be granted some form of power or at least honor in it.[197]

There is then, in the thought of Müntzer, a very definite conception of a communistic society, however nebulous the details may seem to be. It is not, however, the communism of contemporary

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[196] Müntzer to the people of Allstedt, April 26 or 27, 1525: ". . . Man kan euch nit von Gotte sagen, die weil sie uber euch regieren . . . ." Ibid., p. 503. The same theme was sounded already in his "Ausgedrückte Entblössung": ". . . Da werden denn die armen duͤrfftigen leuͤt also hoch betrogen / das es kein zung genuͤg erzelen mag / mit allen worten vnd wercken machen sie es ya also / das der arm man nicht lesen lerne vorm bekuͤmernuss der narung / vnd sie predigen vnuerschempt der arm man soll sich von den Tyrannen lassen schinden vnd schaben / wenn wil er denn lernen die schrifft lesen? Ja lieber Thoma du schwermest / die schrifftgelehrten sollen schoͤne buͤcher lesen / vnd der paur soll jn zuͤhoͤren / denn der glaub kumpt durch gehoͤre / Ach ya / da haben sie eyn feynen griff funden / der wurde vil erger buͦben an die stat der pfaffen vnd muͤnch setzen denn vom anbegynn der welt geschehen ist . . . ." Politische Schriften, p. 35.

[197] Lowell H. Zuck, "Fecund Problems of Eschatological Hope, Election Proof, and Social Revolt in Thomas Müntzer," F.H. Littel, ed., Reformation Studies (Richmond, 1962), p. 244.

Marxists. It is based squarely on the Bible and is to be desired because it makes possible the realization of God's Kingdom on earth. Nor is it to be brought about by the class struggle unless the struggle between the godless and the elect is considered a form of the class struggle.[198] Members of the feudal ruling class were welcomed, even wooed into the Bund. Müntzer nowhere implied that his denunciations of the princes who would not join his Bund were based on the fact that they had merely oppressed the people;[199] rather he denounced them because they had opposed God and His Kingdom[200] and had kept the poor people from learning about the true gospel.[201] There is thus a significant difference between the two types of communism, but one should note that both types are decidedly revolutionary.

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[198] It was clear to Müntzer that he was fighting a holy war for the purity of the church. He wanted to establish such social conditions as would allow the Apostolic Church to appear in all its purity again. In this war God would do the fighting, although it was also clear to Müntzer that He could do this only through man's sword. Regarding the conquering of the Promised Land by the children of Israel, Müntzer stated: ". . . Sie haben das lant nicht durch das schwerdt gewonnen / sondern durch die krafft gottis / aber das schwerdt war das mittel . . . ." "Fürstenpredigt," Politische Schriften, p. 26. This attitude also explains the 'Rainbow' episode at Frankenhausen and numerous other incidents the Marxists would like to explain away because they do not fit into their picture of Müntzer.

[199] Böhmer stated: ". . . Aber wir wissen schon, dass er kein Proletarier war, und wir werden noch sehen, dass er für das breite Volk bis Ende 1524 überhaupt kein Auge, und für dessen wirkliche oder vermeinte Nöte nie ernsteres Interesse und Verständnis gehabt hat . . . ." Müntzer, p. 199.

[200] See note 195. Many other instances of the same could be cited.

The more recent Marxist Müntzer studies, however, have tended to let Müntzer's communistic tendencies fade into the background, at least for the period of the war itself. Instead they have tried to make of him an exponent of the early bourgeois revolution. This involved them in numerous contradictions, however, for Müntzer's actions cannot be understood or explained merely or exclusively from a sociological or political point of view. The Marxists have attempted precisely this despite the fact that they granted Müntzer's religious sincerity. If they granted this sincerity, they should also have explained his actions from this level, but their ideological bias has prevented them from doing so. Because Müntzer desired social change, or even revolution in the social order, there is some truth in the Marxist analysis, but the Marxists fail to realize that this social change was not an end in itself for Müntzer as it is for themselves; it was much more merely the means by which the Church of Christ could be brought back to its apostolic purity. Therefore to speak of Müntzer in terms of the early bourgeois revolution only is misleading. One would come much closer to the truth were one to state that Müntzer tried to use the social turmoil of his own day in order to establish the pure church. To this end he was willing to make common cause with the insurgents for he thought his cause was also their cause. In the end, however, he realized that this had not been the case: the insurgents had indeed fought for selfish ends whereas he had fought a war for holy ends. His judgment regarding the motivation of the peasants was, therefore, not so different from that of Luther.

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[201] See note 196.

The third question to be answered is whether Müntzer did really foresee the ultimate victory of the proletariat but failed in his attempt to achieve it because the time was not ripe, or because he realized that the historical dialectic demanded the victory of the bourgeoisie and therefore postponed temporarily the implementation of his ideas. Once again the Marxists have confused the Kingdom of God with their own classless society, for, as has been noted, Müntzer was not thinking primarily in terms of class struggle. He viewed the Kingdom of God as a social phenomenon to be established here on earth, not as a spiritualistic phenomenon as did Luther and most of the other reformers.[202] Müntzer did foresee this earthly Kingdom of God and tried to establish it. This, however, was not a unique occurrence in the history of the Christian Church. This Kingdom, as has been seen, was not limited to the proletariat no matter how difficult it might be for 'a camel to pass through the eye of a needle,' rather, it was limited to the elect who had the assurance of salvation, although at times it almost seems as though

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[202] Hinrichs, Luther und Müntzer, p. 147. The relationship between Müntzer's theology and his revolutionary tendencies has been the topic of Thomas Nipperdy's essay, "Theologie und Revolution bei Thomas Müntzer." He stated the relationship as follows: "Die Heiligung des Lebens ist nicht auf den individuellen Lebensbereich eingeschränkt, sondern erfasst wie selbstverständlich auch die sozialen und politischen Bezüge. Heiligung geschieht nicht neben der Welt sondern in ihr. Den Rückzug auf einen privaten Bereich gibt es nicht. Christliche Lebensgestaltung ist christliche Weltgestaltung. Die Welt ist nicht lutherisch als Schöpfung hinzunehmen, als verderbt dem Teufel zu überlassen oder vergebend zu lieben, sondern sie ist zu verändern damit Gottes Herrschaft in ihr wirklich wird. Diese Veränderung ist nicht in ein unbestimmtes Jenseits zu vertragen, sondern sie ist jetzt und hier zu realisieren. Und dieser Anspruch lässt sich nicht sektenhaft auf Teilbereiche abdrängen, auf eine Sonderwelt der Erwählten, wie sie sich später die Täufer geschaffen haben, sondern er ist universal. Er muss also—anders als bei Zwingli oder Bucer—total und radikal verstanden werden: die Verchristlichung der Welt ist ein revolutionäres Ereignis." ARG, 54 (1963), 173-74.

Müntzer believed that only the lower classes could belong to the elect.[203] Nor was the Kingdom to be inaugurated by means of the class struggle; it was to be inaugurated by God through His elect when the time was ripe,[204] and no matter how small or how poorly armed the forces of the elect would be, God would give them the victory.[205]

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[203] See note 192 as well as "Ausgedrückte Entblössung," pp. 44 and 46. Zeiss also wrote in a letter to Christoph Meinhart, May 5, 1525: ". . . das Got die Gewaltigen vom Stul stossen will und die Niedrigen erheben, und hat die grosse Zwangsal der Verdruckten angesehen, daraus wal er sie itzt erledigen." Franz, Quellen, p. 512. See also the statement by Hans Hut, ibid., p. 523. Apparently Müntzer combined two thoughts here: (1) That material riches kept one from accepting the true gospel. This is probably why he made the princes give up everything before they joined the Bund. (2) Because the common people did not have these riches, they could have more easily accepted or understood the gospel. These, however, were kept from understanding because they did not have time to learn to read and to meditate on the Scriptures.

[204] See note 198.

[205] ". . . Gedeon hett eynen solchen festen starcken glauben / das er mit jm ein vnzelige grosse welt durch dreyhundert man überwant . . . ." "Ausgedrückte Entblössung," Politische Schriften, pp. 33-34. And in this connection as well: "O aller liebsten bruͤder / wo zuͦ erinnert vns diss Evangelion anderst? denn das der glaub mit alle synen vrsprunge helt vns vnmuͤglich ding fuͤr . . . ." Ibid., p. 41. Hans Hut, an observer at Frankenhausen also stated: "Got der allmechtig wolte jetzo doe Welt reinigen . . . Denselben Regenhogen der Myntzer den Pauern gezaigt und sie getrost und gesagt, das es Got mit inen haben wolt. Si solten nur herzlich streiten und keck sein . . . ." Franz, Quellen, p. 523.

Müntzer's failure, according to those Marxists who denied the latter's religious sincerity, had come about because Müntzer had misjudged the historical dialectic; according to Müntzer himself, however, the cause of his failure was to be found in his followers who had not realized what Müntzer had been preaching about, and, instead of seeking the glory of God and the welfare of Christianity, had sought their own selfish desires.[206] If Müntzer had been fighting a true class war, he would have had no cause to chide his followers for seeking selfish, materialistic ends, for, by the Marxists' own confession, the class struggle of the proletariat against the capitalist is motivated by obviously materialistic ends, and it is precisely the 'myth' of these ends which is to spur it on to victory. From Müntzer's point of view, however, it was because his followers had sought selfish ends that they had failed to achieve their objective, or, more correctly, that God had not allowed them to achieve their objective.

If one were now to lift the religious element out of Müntzer's thought, or discount it as a mask as many Marxists have done, one should come very close to a true picture of the contemporary Marxist revolutionary. It is precisely because Zschäbitz recognized this religious element to be real that his interpretation of Müntzer has been termed the most sensible of Marxist interpretations.[207] Since, however, Zimmermann's, and consequently also Engels', view of Müntzer evidently rested upon conscious falsification, it has to be admitted that Müntzer was truly a religious man and one who was genuinely concerned about the state of the church at the time of the Reformation.[208] It is true that his ideas about the right of resistance against 'tyrannous' rulers differed from those of

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[206] Müntzer's farewell letter to the citizens of Mühlhausen, May 17, 1525: "Lieben Bruder, es ist euch hoch von Noten, das ir solche Schlappen auch nicht empfanget wie die von Frankenhausen, denn solichs ist ane Zweifel entsprossen das ein ider sein eigen Nutz mehr gesucht dan die Rechtfertigung der Christenheit . . . ." Ibid., p. 535.

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[207] Zuck, "Fecund Problems," p. 283, n. 3.

[208] Müntzer's advocacy of the destruction of the godless stood in direct connection with the restoration of the Christian Church. In his "Fürstenpredigt," he stated: ". . . Also sollen sie [the princes] den feinden vortragen den fride Deut. 2. wollen sie geistlich sein vnd die kunst gottis nit berechen 1. Petri. 3. so soll man sie wegk thun. 1. Corint. 5. Aber ich bitt vor sie mit dem frumren Daniel / wo sie gottis offenbarung nicht widder sein / wo sie aber das widderspiel treiben. das man sie erwürge on alle gnade wie Isskias. Josias. Cirus. Daniel. Helias. 3. Regnum 18. die pfaffen Baal verstoͤret haben / anders mag die christliche kirche zcu yrem vrsprung nicht widder kommen. Man muss das vnkraut ausreussen auss dem weingarten gottis in der zceyt der erndten / dann wird der schoͤne rothe Wytz bestendige wortzeln gewinnen vnnd recht auff gehn. Matth. 13 . . . ." Politische Schriften, pp. 26-27.

Luther,[209] but this does not make him any less sincere. His belief that the Holy Spirit which had produced the Scriptures was still active in the hearts of men everywhere and could lead them to a true faith in Christ without recourse to the Scriptures[210] led him to overemphasize the role of the Spirit apart from God's revelation in His Word. This Spirit was constantly revealing new things to men, and to Müntzer he had revealed the imminent inauguration of the Kingdom of God on earth. Even in this belief he was sincere.

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[209] In a passage of his "Hochverursachte Schutzrede" he turned against Luther's teaching regarding obedience to tyrannous rulers: ". . . Aber die gotlosen Regenten soll nyemandt richten / ob sye schon Christum mit fuͤssen treten. Dass du aber den pawrn setigst / schreibst du / die Fürsten werden durch das wort gotes zuͦ scheytern gen / vnd sagest in deiner gloss vber das newlichste Kayserlich Mandat. Die Fürsten werden von dem stuͦl gestossen . . . ." *Ibid*., p. 91.

[210] ". . . Wenn eyner nu seyn lebenlang die Biblien wider gehoͤret noch gesehen het kuͤndt er wol fuͤr sich / durch die gerechten lere des geystes eynen vnbetrieglichen Christenglauben haben/ wie alle die gehabt / die one alle buͤcher die heylige schrifft beschriben haben / vnd er were auch auufs hoͤchst versichert / das er solchen glauben vom vnbetrieglichen Got geschoͤpfft / vnnd nit vom abgekunterfeyten des teuͤfels *oder eygener natur eyngezogen hette* . . . [my italics]." "Ausgedrückte Entblössung," *Plotitische Schriften*, p. 36. See also Hinrichs, *Luther und Müntzer*, p. 48.

Certainly he was no communist atheist who used his religion to cloak his designs; his ideas were an integral part of his belief in God.

One last problem which Engels touched upon was the problem of whether the German Peasants' War had contained a new element or not. It was the contention of Engels that the really radical revolutionaries under Müntzer, his revolutionary conspirators, were drawn from the pre-proletariat class or the declassed persons in the towns and the landless peasants. Before this problem is taken up, however, it may be well to deal with several related problems first. Was Müntzer really the revolutionary genius who guided the whole Peasants' Revolt from his lair at Mühlhausen? Was he the great organizer, or the German national hero who tried to unite a splintered fatherland? The answer seems to be negative. There is no doubt that Müntzer did establish a Bund,[211] a kind of secret society, but this Bund could not have had a very broad base in Germany.[212] It seems to have been confined to Mülhausen and the surrounding district, but here apparently it drew large crowds of people.[213] The purpose of the Bund, however, was not primarily to foment revolution, it only did so when the 'Kingdom' could not be inaugurated peacefully. Its main purpose was to form a nucleus of the elect which would eventually inherit the earth after the godless had been destroyed.[214] Thus, while admitting that Müntzer was an effective agitator in his limited sphere of activity, it must be vigorously denied that he masterminded the whole of the Peasants' Revolt from Mühlhausen. Particularism was far too rampant among the peasants for this. Engels had claimed that even such men as Grebel in Zürich and Hubmaier in Waldshut had been object tools of Müntzer's revolutionary designs. His messengers and agitators had been Anabaptists who had their secret cells in all the cities.[215] But by Müntzer's own confession it is known that he had no influence outside his own particular local area.[216] Not even in his own sphere of influence did everyone choose

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[211] Hans Zeiss wrote to Duke John of Saxony about it on July 28, 1524, Franz, Quellen, p. 486; the chronicler of Mülhausen mentions it in his Chronicle, ibid., p. 501; Müntzer also confessed that he had formed a 'Bund'; and see the "Bekenntnis Thomas Müntzers," ibid., p. 532.

[212] Even Bensing, Thomas Müntzer, p. 107, has to admit that Müntzer's purpose had been ". . . das er wolle das land uff 10 meyl weges umb Molhawsen eingenommen haben und das land zu Hessen und mit den fursten und herrn verfaren, wye oben angezeygt . . . ." Heinrich Böhmer und Paul Kirn, hrsq., Thomas Müntzer's Briefwechsel (Leipzig und Berlin, 1931), p. 165.

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[213] Time and again Zeiss speaks in his dispatches to the Saxon princes of the crowds drawn by Müntzer and Pfeiffer. See also the documents relating to Thomas Müntzer in Walter Peter Fuchs, Akten zur Geschichte des Bauernkriegs in Mitteldeutschland, vol. II (Jena, 1942).

[214] Hinrichs, Luther und Müntzer, pp. 18-20.

[215] Bensing, Thomas Müntzer, p. 133, recognized Engels' error: ". . . Kautsky hat hier die fehlerhafte Meinung Friedrich Engels' übernommen, wonach die engsten Anhänger Thomas Müntzers, die mutigen und ausdauernden Emissäre, Wiedertäufer gewesen seien . . . ."

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[216] In his confession he stated: "In Clegkaw und Hegau bei Basel habe er etliche Artigkel, wie man herschen soll aus dem Evangelio angegeben, daraus furder andere Artigkel gemacht; hetten ine gerne zu sich genommen, habe in aber des gedankt. Die Entporunge habe er des Orts nit gemacht, sondern sein bereit ufgestanden gewest . . . ." Franz, Quellen, p. 531. Günther Franz has made the following comment on this aspect of Müntzer's confession: ". . . Nicht anders ist auch das Zeugnis Thomas Müntzers zu werten, der in seinem 'Bekenntnis' von den 12 Artikeln der Schwarzwälder Bauern spricht. Da Müntzer selbst Ende 1524 in Oberdeutschland geweilt hat und auch weiterhin Verbindung zu den Klettgauer Bauern gehabt zu haben scheint, könnte man meinen dass er um die Entstehung der Artikel Bescheid gewusst hat. Doch die Satzstellung macht deutlich, dass Müntzer hier nur die Antwort von den befragenden Richter in den Mund gelegt worden ist. Er hat vermutlich die Frage des Richters nur bejaht. Nicht von ihm, sondern von seinem Richter stammt das Wort. Der Richter hat anscheinend gefragt: Waren es die 12 Artikel der Schwärzwälder Bauern? Und Müntzer hat geantwortet: zum Teil und andere. Damit erklärt sich auch am zwangslosesten das sonst unverständliche 'zum Teil.'" Franz, "Die Entstehung der 'Zwölf Artikel' der deutschen Bauernschaft," ARG, XXXVI (1939), 197. And in his Bauernkrieg he stated: "Auch Thomas Müntzers Predigt hat daran nichts geändert. Sie scheint fast ohne Wirkung geblieben zu sein . . . Er gab daher auch den Klettgauern etliche Artikel an, 'wie man herrschen soll aus dem Evangelio.' Sie fanden aber bei den Bauern keinen Anklang," p. 110.

Valentin Lötscher, Der deutsche Bauernkrieg in der Darstellung und im Urteil der Zeitgenössischen Schweiger (Bern, 1948), pointed out that Bullinger, upon whom Zimmermann relied for his information regarding Thomas Müntzer's influence in the region bordering on Switzerland, was only attempting to push the blame for the revolution in this region from Zwingli and the Swiss Reformation onto an 'outsider' in order to rescue Zwingli's honor, see pp. 118-25, the same thing that Heinold Fast, Bullinger und die Taufer (Weierhof/Pfalz, 1959), has proven with regard to the Anabaptists. Lötscher also comes to the conclusion that Müntzer's influence in this region was negligible. If, therefore, Zimmermann's argumentation is untenable, and Steinmetz brings no new arguments or new evidence to support Engels' thesis, Müntzer's influence in this region must be discounted especially since to follow him.[217] And if Müntzer himself denied that his leadership extended to all parts of Germany, it must follow that the network of Anabaptist cells was also lacking.[218]

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the revolt was well underway by the time Müntzer made his appearance. Lötscher, Bauernkrieg, p. 124. Indeed, from what we know about Müntzer, it would seem more logical to assume that the revolt in Southern Germany influenced him more than he it.

[217] The Mühlhausen chronicler relates that when Müntzer was about to move against the princes at Frankenhausen many of the citizens of Mühlhausen would not follow him and others had already left him. Franz, Quellen, p. 501.

[218] Regarding Müntzer's role in the Peasant War as a whole, Franz stated: ". . . Mit dem Versagen der Führung hing eng zusammen, dass den Bauern überhaupt jede einheitliche Organisation fehlte. Der Bauernkrieg war nicht gleich einem Bundschuh von langer Hand sorgfältig vorbereitet worden. Die Männer, die wie Müntzer und Pfeiffer in Thüringen und Wendel Hipler in Franken oder die Erben des Bundschuh am Oberrhein den Aufruhr geschürt hatten, scheinen in keiner Verbindung miteinander gestanden zu haben. Der Ausbruch des Bauernkrieges erfolgte überdies unabhängig von ihnen aus örtlichen Voraussetzungen heraus im südlichen Schwarzwald. Von hier aus frass sich die Empörung weiter. Das Beispiel der geglückten Erhebung trug mehr zu ihrer Ausbreitung bei als die Werber, die die Oberschwaben im Frühjahr 1525 durch das Land schickten." Bauernkrieg, p. 285.

But this is not to say that Engels was wrong about the radicals in Müntzer's party coming from the pre-proletariat, as he called it. Norman Cohn has quite conclusively shown that it was always the laborers in industries like the textile industry, or in the mines, together with the peasants from the land who were at loose ends who followed the propheta of the later Middle Ages and rose in one revolt after another. This was not a new element in the revolt, however. It was precisely this group which fell prey to the 'myth' of these quacks. Cohn believes this to have been the case in Müntzer's group as well, but it is also certain, since this was a peasants' revolt, that even many of the more wealthy landholding peasants also joined his group.[219] In the case of Müntzer, however, the revolt was already underway when he appeared on the scene, and all he had to do was to step into the midst of the revolting peasants and give them a 'myth' to strive after. That his teaching served such a function should be clear.[220]

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[219] Bensing even stated: ". . . Sicher werden sich die Rotten der Bauern vorwiegend aus armen Dorfbewohnern rekrutiert haben. Die wenigen Stichproben, die im Zusammenhang mit der Vorliegenden Untersuchung angestellt werden konnten, verweisen jedoch auf die aktive Teilnahme begüterter Bauern am Aufstand . . . ." Thomas Müntzer, p. 145.

[220] ". . . Müntzer wird ein Agitator von gewaltiger Kraft, je mehr er mit der sozial-revolutionären Bewegung in Berührung kommt, mit der er ursprünglich nichts zu tun hatte . . . ." Adolf Waas, Die Bauern im Kampf um Gerechtigkeit 1300-1525 (München, 1964), pp. 232-33.

It cannot be doubted that Müntzer's teaching played the role of a catalyst in an already volatile situation and aided in bringing about revolt, and in this sense he was a great revolutionary. It is also true that he denounced some of the princes and encouraged the masses to kill them. His teaching of the coming of the Kingdom of God, the great classless society where everyone would be equal and all things would be held in common, certainly served the purpose of stirring up the masses. This was truly a 'myth' to spur them on to rebellion. But all this was done in the name of a purer church fit for the Kingdom of God and not merely in the name of well-being or the classless society as an end in itself.

It is quite possible that Marxist historians and theoreticians, with their eye on the future victory of the proletariat in the classless society, have sensed an affinity with Müntzer which was an affinity of aim and method more than anything else. Müntzer aimed at a Utopia by painting a picture of it for the people and encouraging them to fight for it. Essentially this is still what the Marxists are doing today. It does not matter that this picture is a mirage.

The one thing the Marxists had to do in writing their histories of Müntzer was to deny his religious sincerity. This had already been done for them by Zimmermann. Thus they could paint a Marxist picture of Müntzer. The moment, however, Müntzer's religious sincerity is granted, as happens with Zschäbitz, and taken seriously, the whole picture changes and Müntzer once again takes his place in his own century of religious turmoil and social unrest. His revolutionary tendencies remain, but his aims become religious.

CHAPTER IX

THE ANABAPTISTS

A. Anabaptist Origins

In dependence upon Bullinger, Zimmermann had seen the origins of Anabaptism in Zwickau and the Zwickau Prophets, but on the evidence of Sebastian Franck he believed Müntzer not to have been an Anabaptist. Engels had no reason to change that judgment,[1] for he knew nothing of Anabaptist history. Like Zimmermann, he too asserted that Conrad Grebel and Balthasar Hubmaier had not only been followers of Müntzer, but had also belonged to the inner sanctum of the initiated few surrounding him.[2] Yet if Anabaptism had originated in Zwickau and Müntzer had not been an adherent of the Zwickau Prophets but had much rather used the sect to further his revolutionary aims,[3] then how could Grebel and Hubmaier be both Anabaptists and members of Müntzer's inner circle who knew about the latter's rationalistic tendencies and social revolutionary aims? Or, formulated differently, how could the Zwickau Prophets be the originators of Anabaptism and yet Müntzer be the means by which it was spread to Zurich if the latter never really adhered to it? And if Müntzer was not the connecting link between the two groups, how did Anabaptism spread from Zwickau to Zurich? Engels gave no answer, for the problem did not interest him. He was interested in the Anabaptists only insofar as they served Müntzer as agents in the Peasant War.[4]

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[1] Engels, "Bauernkrieg," M/E, Werke, VII, 351.

[2] "Die doppelte Wirksamkeit Münzers, einerseits für das Volk, dem er in der ihm damals allein verständlichen Sprache des religiösen Prophetismus zuredete, und andererseits für die Eingeweihten, gegen die er sich offen über seine schliessliche Tendenz aussprechen konnte, tritt hier besonders deutlich hervor. Hatte er schon früher in Thüringen einen Kreis der entschiedensten Leute, nicht nur aus dem Volk, sondern auch aus der niedrigen Geistlichkeit, um sich versammelt und an die Spitze der geheimen Verbindungen gestellt, so wird er hier der Mittelpunkt der ganzen revolutionären Bewegung von Südwestdeutschland, so organisiert er die Verbindung von Sachsen und Thüringen über Franken und Schwaben bis nach dem Elsass und der Schweizer Grenze und zählt die süddeutschen Agitatoren, wie Hubmaier in Waldshut, Konrad Grebel von Zürich . . . unter seine Schüler und unter die Häupter des Bundes . . . ." Ibid., pp. 357-58.

Bebel did not go beyond the assertions of Engels.[5] Kautsky, however, as has been noted repeatedly, did not merely rely upon Zimmermann for his material; particularly for this part of his book he did extensive research.[6] He began his analysis of Anabaptism with the statement that there had been two centers of Anabaptism: one in Saxony, the other in Switzerland.[7] The Anabaptists in Saxony had indeed originated with the Zwickau Prophets, but their most prominent disciple had been Thomas Müntzer.[8] This had been the center of revolutionary Anabaptism. The other center, in Zurich, had been the source of pacifistic Anabaptism.[9]

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[3] ". . . Münzer verteidigte sie [Zwickau Prophets], obwohl er sich ihnen nie unbedingt anschloss, sondern sie vielmehr unter seinen Einfluss bekam . . . ." Ibid., p. 352.

[4] ". . . Aber dass Leute an der Spitze der Bewegung standen, die diese durch Wiedertäuferische und sonstige Emissäre organisiert hatten, das beweist das Faktum der Gleichzeitigkeit aller einzelnen Aufstände . . . ." Ibid., p. 383.

[5] Bebel, Bauernkrieg, pp. 106, 125.

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[6] He wrote to Engels on March 5, 1895: ". . . Hast Du nicht Zeit oder Lust, das Ganze zu lesen, dann bitte ich Dich, wenigstens das Kapitel über die Wiedertäufer anzusehen, das mich besonders interessiert hat. In den früheren Kapiteln wirst Du theils schon Bekanntes finden, theils sind sie, als Einleitung, nur kursorisch gehalten . . . .

"Dagegen bei den Wiedertäufern fand ich jungfräulichen Boden. Hier konnte ich auch, im Gegensatz zu den Taboriten, auf die Quellen zurückgehen. Wenigstens so weit sie gedruckt vorliegen, habe ich sie entweder an der hiesigen Bibliothek oder im Buchhandel gefunden. Der westphälische Dialekt machte mir allerdings einige Schwierigkeiten. Aber ich habe mich hineingelesen. Vom holländischen Material musste ich leider absehen. Aber ich denke, ich habe genug gefunden, um die charakteristischen Merkmale der Bewegung festzustellen und sie begreiflich zu machen. Und soviel ich weiss, bin ich darin der erste. In diesem Kapitel hoffe ich, etwas geleistet zu haben." E/K, Briefwechsel, p. 423.

[7] Kautsky, Vorläufer, p. 107.

The Zurich and Zwickau Anabaptists had not sprung from the same source, however. Kautsky did not develop this theory himself, but he found it just newly formulated by the Leipzig Church historian, Ludwig Keller.[10] Keller saw the origins of Anabaptism[11] in the continued existence of medieval heretical sects, particularly the Waldensians, in areas where the printing trade was carried on. Basel had been one of the chief centers of heretical ideas precisely for this reason. With the coming of the Reformation and the destruction of the absolute rule of the Catholic Church by Luther, these heretical groups had begun to emerge from the twilight realm of secrecy to the light of day.[12] Kautsky accepted this theory as well as the fact that the Swiss Anabaptists had been pacifistic.

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[8] Kautsky did not follow Zimmermann and Engels in assuming that Müntzer had made use of the Prophets and the Anabaptists as such. Ibid., p. 37.

[9] Ibid., p. 127.

[10] Ludwig Keller, Die Reformation und die älteren Reformparteien (Leipzig, 1885); and in his second edition Kautsky also made use of Keller's Die Anfänge der Reformation und die Ketzerschulen (Berlin, 1897).

[11] Keller rejected the name Widertäufer or Anabaptists, preferring to call them alt evangelische Taufgesinnte or simply Täufer. Keller, Die Reformation, p. 367.

Keller, however, had not only separated the Zurich Anabaptists from the Zwickau Prophets and Thomas Müntzer,[13] he had also argued that these had never really been Anabaptists.[14] Kautsky, on the other hand, knew of the letter the Swiss Anabaptists had written to Thomas Müntzer which he found printed in Cornelius,[15] but despite the fact that he pointed to the fact that the Swiss Anabaptists had taken exception especially to Müntzer's warlike utterances, he stressed that they had written, ". . . in the other articles you please us better than anyone else in Germany or other lands . . . ."[16] Kautsky also cited the passage in Sebastian Franck's Chronica which stated that Müntzer's disciples in Thuringia had not been Anabaptists and that Müntzer himself had never rebaptized, as well as the fact that the various groups of Anabaptists had unanimously and consistently protested that Müntzer had never been one of them.[17] In spite of all this, however, Kautsky held fast to the theory he probably found in Bullinger, whom he quoted at length in other contexts, that Müntzer had met with the Zurich Anabaptists at the Swiss border on his journey through Southern Germany.[18] His evidence was the passage in Müntzer's "Protestation" in which the latter had traced the corruption of the Apostolic Church to the practice of infant baptism. He admitted, however, that the actual practice of adult baptism had begun in Zurich in the beginning of 1525. Indeed, he stated that by the time the Zurich Anabaptists had begun to practise adult baptism Müntzer had become so involved in his great revolutionary drama that such sectarian Kleinkram must have appeared totally meaningless to him.[19]

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[12] Ibid., pp. 365-95.

[13] Keller based this statement on S. Heberle, "Die Anfänge des Anabaptismus in der Schweiz," Jahrbuch für deutsche Theologie (1858), p. 258. Ibid., p. 371.

[14] "Mit gutem Grunde haben desshalb wahrheitsliebende Autoren im Jahre 1733 Th. Walch Einleitung in die Religionsstreitigkeiten und neuerdings H.W. Erbkam Geschichte der protestantischen Sekten, I, 592 hervorgehoben, 'dass man Münzer nicht mit vollem Recht unter die Wiedertäufer rechnen kann,' und von einem der genauesten Kenner des nachmaligen oberdeutschen Anabaptismus, Th. Keim, Schwäbische Reformationsgeschichte, p. 59 is die Thatsache festgestellt worden, dass 'die Wirksamkeit der Sachsen Storch, Münzer u.s.w. an den Hauptsitzen des Anabaptismus ziemlich spurlos vorübergegangen ist.'

"Die genauen Untersuchungen, welche ich in langjährigen Studien über diese Frage angestellt habe, bestätigen durchaus die Ansichten der eben angeführten Männer, welche zudem mit der Tradition und den Chronisten der Täufer, die man bisher ganz unbeachtet gelassen hat, vollkommen übereinstimmen . . . ." Ibid.

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[15] Cornelius, Berichte der Augenzeugen über das Münsterische Wiedertäuferreich (Münster, 1853), II, 240.

[16] Kautsky, Vorläufer, p. 128.

[17] Ibid., p. 129.

[18] Ibid., p. 128.

As he had done in other sections of his study, Mehring accepted Kautsky's conclusions with regard to the origins of Anabaptism.[20] Ernst Bloch, however, although he knew Kautsky's book and praised it,[21] did not differentiate between Müntzer and the Anabaptists at all, but nor did he attempt to trace the origins of Anabaptists within the orbit of Müntzer's influence. This he did by quoting four words from the letter of Grebel and his friends to Müntzer where the former had referred to Müntzer as the ". . . purest preacher of God's truth . . . ," and stating that the Swiss Anabaptists had assuredly known of Müntzer's planned trip to the Swiss border in advance. It was from him that the Swiss group had acquired its revolutionary communistic tendencies. Certainly Hubmaier, and very probably the whole Anabaptist mevement, had looked up to Müntzer as to the star which drew them irresistibly into its chiliastic orbit.[22]

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[19] Ibid., p. 129.

[20] In a note to the 1908 edition of Engels' Bauernkrieg Mehring remarked, referring to Kautsky's study of the Anabaptists: ". . . Hinsichtlich wäre denn auch zu berichtigen oder einzuschränken, was Engels über die Wiedertäufer . . . sagt," p. 123.

[21] ". . . Zuletzt noch gab Kautsky, das Ganze auch rein quellenmässig in grösseren Zusammenhang bringend, ein Münzerfragment in 2. Band seiner 'Vorläufer des neueren Sozialismus,' Stuttgart 1920; hier machen sich der freundlichere Blick, die revolutionäre Wertbeziehung in Auslese und Gruppierung des Materials, sowie vor allem die ökonomisch-historische Methode angenehm bemerkbar . . . ." Bloch, Thomas Münzer, pp. 15-16.

The tendency to draw the Swiss Anabaptists within the orbit of Müntzer's influence, apparent even in Kautsky who knew of Keller's arguments and the literature he had cited against precisely this tendency, now became the main theme in the Marxist discussion of the origins of Anabaptism. In previous chapters we noted that Smirin, in his orthodox zeal, had gone beyond the call of duty to prove every contention of Engels correct. This he did in spite of the fact that Engels had accepted Kautsky's corrections. He proceeded to do precisely the same with regard to the Zimmermann-Engels thesis that the Anabaptists had been Müntzer's disciples.

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[22] Ibid., pp. 63-64.

Smirin also knew of the letter from the Zurich Anabaptists to Müntzer and that they had protested against Müntzer's revolutionary tendencies,[23] but this did not deter him from making them into Müntzer's emissaries and responsible for spreading the latter's concept of a Volksreformation. We have already noted that Smirin devoted a whole chapter to proving Müntzer's influence over Hubmaier.[24] Hubmaier, of course, had not been a pacifist, but he had been in contact with the Zurich Anabaptists and these had been the carriers of Müntzer's ideas.[25] Yet Smirin had nowhere shown how the Zurich group had become Müntzer's disciples.

Zimmermann had argued that the itinerant preachers spreading the new teachings in the southwestern corner of Germany had been Müntzer's Anabaptist disciples. The passage he had relied upon as his source had come from the chronicle of Fridolin Siecher.[26] Siecher, however, had referred to them as Lutheran preachers, therefore Smirin was forced to demonstrate what Siecher had really meant. He did this by stating that, as a Roman Catholic, Siecher had merely tried to place all the blame on Luther, a typically Roman Catholic tactic.[27] Yet this same chronicler had also asserted that Ludwig Hätzer had been instrumental in drawing up some peasant articles together with Sebastian Lotzer. This, of course, Smirin accepted and proceeded to prove that Hätzer, an intimate of the radical Zurich Anabaptist group and disciple of Thomas Müntzer, had indeed played an important role in spreading Müntzer's ideas of a Volksreformation. Yet he could not understand why Siecher would name a prominent Anabaptist as having been important in the Peasant War when he was trying to place the blame for this war on Luther![28]

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[23] Smirin, Volksreformation, pp. 270-71.

[24] See Chapter VI, pp. 358-59.

[25] Smirin, Volksreformation, p. 399. ". . . Er wandte sich dem revolutionären Lager der Volksreformation, den radikalen Zürich Wiedertäufer und der Lehre Münzers zu . . . ."

[26] Ibid., p. 446.

If, however, Hätzer and Hubmaier, both Anabaptists, had been active in propagating Müntzer's ideas in the Peasant War, then there was no reason why Smirin should not argue that when the Zurich Anabaptists were forced to flee from Zurich early in 1525 they did not bring the Artikelbrief, that document which had originated under Müntzer's influence, from the region of revolt to Swabia.[29] Siecher had stated that the 'widertauf' had spread into all regions during this time; and this, together with the fact that the chronicler brought Hätzer together with the peasant uprising was enough to make the Zürich Anabaptists the propagators of Müntzer's teachings and the center for the ideas of the Volksreformation in the south. Yet he failed to reconcile this revolutionary activity of the Zurich Anabaptists with their letter to Müntzer, from which he had quoted, in which they had so decisively condemned the latter's revolutionary activity.[30]

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[27] Ibid., pp. 453-55. However, like other Marxists, Smirin accepted all of Luther's arguments for the influence of Müntzer in the Peasant War for well-informed evidence. See ibid., p. 281.

[28] Ibid., pp. 456-57.

[29] Ibid., p. 459.

Meusel did not go to such lengths to prove Engels' and Zimmermann's thesis; for him it sufficed merely to quote the passage from Engels to have decided the matter.[31] Anabaptist studies, however, except for Kautsky's study, remained peripheral to the central interests of the Marxists until Gerhard Zschäbitz turned his attention to them in 1958.[32] Zschäbitz saw the reconciliatory approach of non-Mennonite historians to Anabaptist history as an attempt to attack Marxism with a unified church front.[33] In order for historians of other confessions to become conciliatory in their approach to Anabaptist history, however, the Anabaptist movement had been ". . . unilaterally robbed of its radical wing and excluded from an involvement in the broad mass movements after the Peasant War . . . ."[34] This, according to Zschäbitz, had been a wanton act perpetrated by ideologically bound bourgeois historians which tore historical continuities asunder. The separation of the two groups and the transfer of the origins of Anabaptism to the more peaceful Zurich had become a typical approach to the problem by Mennonite historians, particularly of Harold S. Bender, who wanted above all to remove the Anabaptists from the stigma of association with the Mordpropheten, Thomas Müntzer.[35]

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[30] Smirin's frequent references to Zimmermann in this section, whom he cites with approval, makes it obvious that he was once again simply trying to prove Engels' theory which the latter had 'borrowed' from Zimmermann.

[31] Meusel, Thomas Müntzer, p. 162.

[32] Zschäbitz, Zur mitteldeutschen Wiedertauferbewegung.

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[33] Ibid., p. 13. The fear of Marxist historians that 'bourgeois' historians may lose their prejudices and write more 'objective' history would make one believe that they fear they will lose what allies they had, particularly in older Roman Catholic interpretations. But they cannot admit that history can be written objectively, so they must find some other reason for this phenomenon.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Ibid., p. 14.

Zschäbitz admitted that Bender had been formally correct when he stated that adult baptism had not been practised in Saxony, even though arguments against infant baptism had been raised here. However, should a metamorphic religious symbol be the criterion by which one divided a broad religious movement whose adherents had been dissatisfied with the Zurich and Wittenberg Reformation? What Zschäbitz was interested in were the common, not the divisive elements.[36] He therefore proceeded to trace the influence of Müntzer on Hans Hut particularly and also, as a result, through him on the entire Austrian, Moravian, as well as South German Anabaptist movement.[37]

Since the Marxists from Zschäbitz on have concerned themselves primarily with the Central German and Münsterite Anabaptist movement for obvious reasons, their argumentation concerning the origins of Anabaptism has been very similar to that of Zschäbitz. They have pointed, as Hanna Köditz did, to Müntzer's influence over men like

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[36] Ibid., p. 15.

[37] Ibid., pp. 28-36, and 49-75. It is significant, however, that Zschäbitz left the Zurich Anabaptists wholly out of consideration. Although he cited Bender's article on Thomas Müntzer, the Zwickau Prophets, and the Anabaptists, he failed to include even in his bibliography the former's fundamental study on Conrad Grebel. As a matter of fact all of the important literature on the Zurich Anabaptists was neglected.

Melchior Rinck and Hans Hut and the connections these men had with the Anabaptist movement in Southern Germany, Austria, and Moravia.[38] They admit, as did Günter Mühlpfordt, that there were two centers of Anabaptism, but they also argue for a decisive influence of Müntzer's writings, if not his personality, over the Zurich Anabaptists.[39] Yet the important difference between the two groups remained—the pacifism of the Swiss Anabaptist—which, despite all the similarities between them, separated the one group from the other.[40] Thus Bensing was forced to admit that Engels had been mistaken in his assumption that the Anabaptists had been Müntzer's disciples.[41]

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[38] Hanna Köditz, Volksbewegung in Mühlhausen, pp. 153-75. This part of her dissertation was later printed as "Zur Ideologie der Täuferbewegung in Mühlhausen in Thüringen," Frühbürgerliche Revolution, pp. 184-207.

[39] "Die beiden Entstehungsherde der Täuferbewegung, Zwickau und Zürich, waren solche Kontaktstellen. Zwickau brachte die radikale Weiterführung der Lutherschen Reformation und Zürich die der Zwinglischen. Das waren die inneren Entwicklungsprozesse, auf welche Fremdberührungen und Bildungserlebnisse wie historische Katalysatoren einwirkten.

"Analog dem Prioritätstreit zwischen Lutheranern und Zwinglianern ist bis heute die besonders durch die Kontroverse zwischen Troeltsch und Holl bekannte Frage umstritten, ob das Täufertum von Zwickau oder Zürich seinen Ausgang nahm. Zwickau ging zwar zeitlich voraus (seit 1521), brachte aber nur eine Grundlegung, nicht die eigentliche Begründung des Täufertums; die Spättaufe wurde gefordert, aber noch nicht praktiziert. Die Mennoniten fussen auf der Zürcher Tradition. Ihr führender Historiker, H.S. Bender, legt, anders als W. Köhler, der Tatsache, dass die Zürcher vor dem Übergang zur Erwachsenentaufe Schriften Müntzers und Karlstadts studierten, kein Gewicht bei." Günter Mühlpfordt, "Deutsche Täufer in östlichen Ländern," Frühbürgerliche Revolution, p. 234.

In addition to the efforts made to find a direct and personal relationship between Zwickau-Müntzer and the Swiss Anabaptists, and the attempts to demonstrate the influence of Müntzer's ideas over the pacifistic Anabaptists, a third attempt to relate the two wings of the Anabaptist movement to a common background has emerged in Marxist historiography. This derives from the Marxist approach to history in general and to ideological phenomena in particular which sees ideas or ideologies as the superstructure of specific economic and social population stratas. The theory, as formulated from Kautsky through Zschäbitz onward, therefore, sees Anabaptism, both that in Saxony as well as in Zurich, as resulting from the desire of the lower classes to move beyond the position of Luther in Saxony and Zwingli in Zurich. This theory is a particular application of the more general theory that heretical movements as such, and especially those of the Middle Ages, ultimately, despite all interrelationship between ideas and economic base, rest on a social and economic basis and express the wishes of a certain class. The two Anabaptist movements are therefore seen as a continuation of the medieval heretical movements, particularly the Waldensians, Beghards, Beguines, Flagellants and others. In so doing, the Marxists once more draw close to Keller's theory,[42] yet in their hands the theory explains much more than in Keller's. Thus, although Zschäbitz restricted his study to Central Germany, implicitly he applied the thesis to

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[40] Steinmetz, Deutschland 1476-1648, p. 166.

[41] Bensing, Thomas Müntzer, p. 133.

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[42] "Sooft Kellers These vom mittelalterlichen Ursprung der Täufer auch mit guten Gründen bestritten und widerlegt wurde, taucht sie doch in der einen oder anderen Variante immer wieder auf. Ihre Zählebigkeit erklärt sich daraus, dass sie nicht absolut falsch ist, sondern eine Teilwahrheit in sich einschliesst, eine Beobachtung oder Erahnung von Zusammenhängen zum Ausdruck bringt, deren theoretische Verarbeitung für ein nichtmaterialistisches Geschichtsverständnis allerdings erhebliche Schwierigkeiten bereitet: die Tatsache nämlich, dass täuferische Vorstellungswelt und Theologie viele Elemente aufweisen, die wir auch bei vorangegangenen häretischen Bewegungen finden. Gemeinsamkeiten, die in der sozialen Verwandtschaft der Bewegungen wurzeln und in der Begrenztheit heterodoxer Ausdrucksmöglichkeit im Bereich christlicher Glaubenssätze." Brendler, Das Täuferreich zu Münster, p. 42.

Zurich as well.[43] Because of their sociological approach to history, this theory has become the central theme of all Marxist Anabaptist historiography.[44]

B. A Sociology of Anabaptism

The sociological approach to history of the dogmatic Marxist may grant more insight when applied to social groups than when applied to individuals like Luther, but even here it underestimates rather badly the power of ideas. Rather than trace the development of ideas in the thought of men, the Marxists prefer to postulate a mystical connection between the economic and social conditions of society and the consciousness of man, a connection they cannot demonstrate exists, therefore they must continually assert its presence.[45]

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[43] Zschäbitz, Wiedertäuferbewegung, pp. 122-40.

[44] See the following: Mühlpfordt, "Deutsche Täufer," pp. 234-35; A.N. Tschistoswonow, "Die soziale Basis und der historische Ort des revolutionären Täufertumus," WZdKMU, 14 (1965), 3, 407-18; Günter Vogler, "Gab es eine radikale Reformation?" WZdKMU, 14 (1965), 3, 495-500; Gerhard Brendler, "Die täuferische Reformationsbewegung in Münster in Westfalen als Teilerscheinung der frühbürgerlichen Revolution in Deutschland," WZdKMU, 14 (1965), 3, 501-504, as well as in his Das Täuferreich zu Münster 1534/35, pp. 56-63.

In his first study on the Peasant War, Kautsky had already pointed to the fact that the Anabaptists had recruited their followers from the city proletariat despite the fact that he as yet had not really studied their history.[46] But even after his extensive study of the Anabaptists in preparation for his *Vorläufer des neueren Sozialismus* he did not deem it necessary to change his opinion.[47] It has already been noted that Kautsky accepted Keller's thesis that the origins of Anabaptism were to be found in the continued existence of Medieval heretical sects. Keller had obviously not meant this in any sociological sense, rather he had postulated a continuity of ideas from one group to the other.

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[45] Thus Brendler, after quoting several of Engels' last letters *in extenso* (to Bloch, September 21, 1891, and to Schmidt, October 27, 1890), stated: ". . . Freilich darf man sich die soziale Rezeption religiöser Ideen nicht im Sinne *bewusster und pragmatisch gezielter Auslese des Verwertbaren vorstellen* [my italics]. Es handelt sich vielmehr um einen spontanen Prozess, der das subjektiv lautere Verhältnis des Ideologen zu seinen religiösen Argumenten nicht ausschliesst, eher voraussetzt. So erweist sich auch gegenüber religiösen Erscheinungen die ökonomische Bewegung der Gesellschaft in 'letzter Instanz' als das Ausschlaggebende: Über das Sozialinteresse Gläubigen." *Das Täuferreich zu Münster*, pp. 56-57.

[46] Kautsky, "Die Bergarbeiter und der Bauernkrieg," p. 514.

[47] "Die Wiedertaufe, die Sache des Proletariats . . . ." *Vorläufer*, p. 271.

In Kautsky's hands the thesis changed its emphasis, however. The ideas which one found in Anabaptism could be found in the lower stratas of society, especially the proletariat, in different regions under similar economic conditions. Since both the Swiss Anabaptists as well as the Saxon group had advocated communism and had come from the proletarian class but had differed in their attitude toward revolt, this difference had to be found in the different economic conditions of the proletariat in the two regions.[48] Thus, in the final analysis, certain ideologies were expressed by corresponding social classes, but these ideologies were in turn modified by existing local economic and social differences. Yet Kautsky had to point out that the movement in Switzerland had literally 'crawled' with intellectuals whereas in Saxony Müntzer had become prominent not least of all because of his intellectual isolation. Why this should be so and what relationship these leaders had to the intellectual origins, if any, of the movement Kautsky failed to elucidate.[49]

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[48] ". . . Indes viel einschneidender noch als durch importierte Lehren wird der Charakter der sozialen Bewegung eines Landes bestimmt durch dessen eingenartige gesellschaftliche und politische Verhältnisse. Und diese waren in der Schweiz in vielem sehr verschieden von denen Sachsens. Was letzteres Land auszeichnete, war der Bergbau, namentlich auf Silber. Er förderte das Aufkommen der fürstlichen Gewalt, schuf aber auch in den Bergarbeitern ein kraftvolles, trotziges, in grossen Massen zusammenwohnendes Proletariat, förderte die Warenproduktion in der Landwirtschaft, damit aber auch den Landhunger der Grundherren, und spitzte alle sozialen Gegensätze jener Zeit aufs schärfste zu.

"Ganz anders in der Schweiz. Da ist kein Bergbau, daher auch keinwehrhaftes Massenproletariat. Die Landwirtschaft ist, wenigstens zum grossen Teil noch, sehr urwüchsig, der Bodenkommunismus noch stark, von einem absoluten Fürstentum keine Spur. Vielmehr finden wir bäuerliche und städtische Republiken, eine bäuerliche und bürgerliche Demokratie, die, solange sie sich noch schwach und bedroht fühlt, den Kommunismus sympathisch gegenübersteht, dessen nächste Feinde auch ihre Feinde sind.

"Alles das musste darauf hinwirken, die friedfertigen Tendenzen des Waldenser–und Beghardentums in der Schweiz zu verstärken. Es bewirkte aber auch, da die Klassengegensätze noch nicht so schroff zugespitzt waren wie in Sachsen, dass die Bewegung weniger eine proletarische wurde als dort . . . ." Kautsky, Vorläufer, p. 110.

What were Kautsky's reasons for believing that Anabaptism had been the ideological expression of the proletariat? Since communism was the aim of Kautsky's contemporary proletarian class, and since Kautsky believed all Anabaptists to have advocated communism to a greater or lesser degree, this desire could have been expressed only by the proletariat of the time.[50] Secondly, the Anabaptists had taught adult baptism which, like Christian communism, had been an ever recurring ideal of the oppressed classes and had expressed their opposition to the state church.[51] For Kautsky, therefore, at least these two aspects of Anabaptist religious thought were finally motivated by a political opposition which had its roots in economic circumstances.

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[49] Ibid., pp. 110-11.

[50] Ibid., pp. 122-23. Kautsky noted, however, that not all had been communists. "Wir finden also bei den Wiedertäufern zwei Richtungen, wie unter den Taboriten und den Böhmischen Brüdern . . . eine strengere, die mit dem vollkommenen Kommunismus Ernst machen will . . . Und daneben die mildere, die das Privateigentum anerkennt und bloss verlangt, man solle es besitzen, 'als besitze man es nicht' . . . ," p. 123.

Zschäbitz disagreed with Kautsky that only the proletariat had joined the Anabaptist ranks; its social base had been much broader.[52] Anabaptism had in fact been the ". . . reservoir of the many faceted revolutionary impulses of the people. Hatred of governmental authority, desire for revenge, ascetic renunciation, hatred of the world and the worldly 'servants of God,' despair . . . ascetic pride—all of these manifested themselves in the teachings of the Anabaptists . . . ."[53] Those who espoused the teachings of Anabaptism had come above all from the social elements which had been experiencing an economic recession due to the price rise.[54]

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[51] Ibid., p. 130.

[52] Zschäbitz, Wiedertäuferbewegung, p. 160.

[53] Ibid., p. 168. In his "Die Stellung der Täuferbewegung im Spannungsbogen der deutschen frühbürgerlichen Revolution," Frühbürgerliche Revolution, p. 155, he specified the following as social groups: ". . . Der sozialen Herkunft nach treten uns städtische Plebejer und Vertreter des Vorproletariats, Gesellen, kleine Handwerker bestimmter Berufsgruppen, Bauern, aber auch hin und wieder Vertreter aus den Bildungsschichten entgegen, die um eine neue, organisierende Ideologie rangen." He cited Paul Peachy, Die soziale Herkunft der Schweizer Täufer in der Reformationszeit (Karlsruhe, 1954), as his source.

Although Zschäbitz certainly knew better, he portrayed the pacifism of Anabaptism as a result of the defeat of the Peasant War[55] and the Münster debacle.[56] Not only did Zschäbitz make these social upheavals responsible for the Anabaptist's pacifism, he also saw lurking behind every Anabaptist theological tenet the hatred of the exploited masses against the government. The separation of Church and State, for example, and the Anabaptist rejection of the temporal governing authorities were seen by Zschäbitz as expressions of hatred of the governing state or church authorities.[57] Similarly, adult baptism,[58] the Anabaptist spiritual interpretation of the communion service,[59] the implementation of church discipline,[60] and community of goods[61] were all 'objective' manifestations of the suppressed hatred of the lower classes against the existing authorities in Church and State.

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[54] Zschäbitz, Wiedertäuferbewegung, p. 158. Zschäbitz does not prove this, he merely assumes it. In a footnote just previous to this statement he quoted from Peachy, Die soziale Herkunft, p. 86: ". . . Obschon diese Linien später abbrachen und die Täufer sich nur noch in den entlegenen und ärmeren Orten halten konnten, zeigt es sich doch klar, dass das Täufertum sich zunächst in den wirtschaftlich bestgestellten Gebieten der Schweiz verbreitete."

[55] ". . . Der hier entstehende Pazifismus entsprach vollauf der Volksstimmung nach der Niederlage des Bauernkrieges und konnte sich zur Ablehnung jeder Gewalt in beliebiger Form verdichten . . . ." Ibid., p. 158.

[56] Ibid., p. 166.

[57] Ibid., pp. 83-87.

It is significant that Zschäbitz did not concern himself in the least with the genesis of Anabaptist thought in Zurich as it developed in the *Auseinandersetzung* between the radicals and Zwingli. But even with regard to the Anabaptism of Central Germany he began his sociological analysis with the following remark: "The social position of those Anabaptists who appeared in court may best be established by keeping to their vocations. By doing this we shall avoid wrong conclusions to which we might arrive were we to proceed from a one-sided analysis of their speakers . . . ."[62] Zschäbitz apparently did not think it would lead to false conclusions were he to leave out the leading Anabaptists completely for he proceeded to do precisely this. Nor did he even enquire into the wealth of those he did cite.

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[58] *Ibid.*, pp. 90-94.

[59] *Ibid.*, p. 97.

[60] *Ibid.*, p. 99.

[61] *Ibid.*, p. 106.

[62] *Ibid.*, p. 155.

To substantiate the conclusions he reached for Central Germany, Zschäbitz turned to the sociological study of Swiss Anabaptism by Paul Peachy.[63] However, as Claus-Peter Clasen has correctly pointed out, Peachy, without making this very clear, most assuredly spoke of well-to-do artisans, masters, and peasants, whereas Zschäbitz automatically assumed that Peachy had referred to the poorest elements of these classes.[64] It was no wonder, therefore, that Zschäbitz could assume that Peachy's study had in reality supported the Marxist thesis.

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[63] See above, note 53.

[64] "Die Arbeit von Paul Peachy über die soziale Herkunft der Schweizer Täufer z.B. erlaubt völlig entgegengesetzte Deutungen, da sie ausschliesslich auf Berufsangaben beruht. Nach Peachy bestätigt seine Untersuchung, dass das Täufertum eine religiöse Sekte war (Peachy, Social Background, S.116). Der marxistischer Historiker Zschäbitz dagegen sieht in Peachys Arbeit einen Beweis dafür, dass das Täufertum in Wahrheit eine untergründige politische Bewegung war (Zschäbitz, S. 157 f.). Peachy versteht offensichtlich unter Handwerkern selbständige Meister mit mittelgrossem Vermögen. Zschäbitz dagegen sieht im Ausdruck 'Handwerker' sofort verarmte Meister, besitzlose Gesellen und städtisches Proletariat. Genauso versteht Peachy unter Bauern anscheinend mittelgrosse Bauern, während Zschäbitz hungernde Tagelöhner und verschuldete Kleinbauern zu denken scheint. —Eine Schwäche von Peachys Untersuchung ist, dass sie sich nur auf die Jahre 1529 bis 1540 erstreckt. Die spätere Entwicklung bleibt unberücksichtigt." Claus-Peter Clasen, Die Wiedertäufer im Herzogtum Württemberg und in benachbarten Herrschaften (Stuttgart, 1965), p. 118, n. 1.

In a succeeding article Zschäbitz proceeded to place the Anabaptist movement into its Marxist frame of reference: the frühbürgerliche Revolution.[65] Having demonstrated that Anabaptism had been a movement of those social stratas which had manifested an underlying political hatred of the governing authorities because they were destined to economic ruin by the effects of the price revolution, Zschäbitz could argue that Anabaptism was a continuation, in a somewhat changed form, of the revolutionary tendencies of the Volksreformation.[66] After the Peasant War the revolutionary tendencies in the masses had gone underground or had hidden themselves behind religious façades only to erupt again in isolated instances but especially in the revolt of the Münster Anabaptists. It was because the Mennonite historians had argued against any influence of Anabaptism's revolutionary wing on the origins of peaceful Anabaptism in Zurich that Zschäbitz felt compelled to turn against H.S. Bender time and again; for if there was no connection between the two movements, Anabaptism could hardly be portrayed as the expression of a mass movement after the defeat of the peasants.

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[65] Zschäbitz, "Die Stellung der Täuferbewegung im Spannungsbogen der deutschen frühbürgerlichen Revolution." Frühbürgerliche Revolution, pp. 152-62.

[66] "Ausdruck der Massenstimmung nach dem Höhepunkt der frühbürgerlichen Revolution ist die Täuferideologie, die trotz ihrer ausserordentlichen Zersplitterung und Variationsbreite in der Argumentation, wie auch in der Konsequenz praktischen Verhaltens durchaus übereinstimmende Merkmale aufweist . . . ." Ibid., p. 163.

But this was precisely what Zschäbitz intended to do.[67] He therefore argued that the teachings of Anabaptism had contained the 'objective' protests of all those who had been disappointed in the practical results of the bourgeois Lutheran Reformation and the failure of the Peasant War. Anabaptism, of course, had not been the only response of the masses to these phenomena. Many returned to the bosom of the Roman Catholic Church, others submitted unwillingly to the status quo, but not a few strove to develop new forms of social life and thought and therefore offered a fruitful terrain for teachings which opposed those of the established church. The emerging Anabaptist movement had supplied precisely such poles around which the elements of dissatisfaction could crystallize. These appeared first in the cities and then on the land. In effect, therefore, Anabaptism gave a reorientation to the forces opposed to feudalism and to a certain degree formed the avant guard of this opposition.[68]

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[67] "Beim Studium der Verhörsakten lässt sich erkennen, dass Sympathien für täuferische Lehren sehr breit verbreitet waren, dass dies aber durchaus noch nicht feste Zugehörigkeit zu einer Gemeinde bedeutete. Diese blieben in der Frühzeit fliessende Gebilde ohne fest umrissene und erstarrte Lehrmeinungen . . . ." _Ibid_., p. 165.

[68] _Ibid_., p. 155.

Since Anabaptism was to constitute the tail end of the great Volksbewegung of the Reformation era, it was important to stress that the movement had been fluid in its initial stages and had encompassed a large following from the lower classes before it became sectarian in character.[69] With the defeat of the Münster Anabaptists, however, the movement had lost the last of its revolutionary tendencies for several reasons: in the first instance because of the increased severity of persecution by governmental authorities, and secondly because of an inner structural change which resulted in the expulsion of the radicals. The cause as well as the effect was that the ideological leadership of the movement had been transferred into the hands of the petite bourgeoisie and the pre-proletarian element excluded. Under Menno Simons the movement then became a sectarian one.[70]

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[69] Ibid., p. 160. "Dass täuferische Vorstellungskomplexe durchaus nicht nur von engen 'Sektenkreisen' getragen wurden, sondern in ihren Grundzügen den Überlegungen breiter Volksmassen entsprachen, das zeigt eine sozial-politische Utopie, die den Nürnberger Buchdrucker und Buchführer Hans Hergot zum Verfasser hat . . . die in Jahre 1526 entstanden sein wird . . . ."

Thus had the foundation for a Marxist sociological interpretation of Anabaptism been laid. Upon this foundation the Marxists have begun to build. It is characteristic, though, that the originators of Anabaptist thought are consistently dismissed with a magnanimous wave of the hand. Tschistoswonow could therefore argue that:

> A number of facts seem to speak in favor of the representatives of the theory of the class indifference of Anabaptism. Among the leaders, ideologists, and adherents of Anabaptism we do in fact find representatives of wealthy social stratas as well as

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[70] Ibid., p. 162. At the end of his book Zschäbitz indulged in some cheap as well as uninformed polemics. He attempted to deny that today's Mennonites are the true descendents of Reformation Anabaptism. In order to prove this Zschäbitz used the German Mennonites as an example who, in many instances, had been ardent supporters of the Nazi regime. In doing so, however, Zschäbitz either demonstrated an abysmal ignorance of Anabaptist-Mennonite history or else he consciously suppressed any reference to the fact that approximately 40,000 to 50,000 Mennonites left every material possession they had accumulated in Russia to migrate to Canada, the United States, and South America after World War I when the communists took over in that country. This was only the last of a long series of emigrations these Mennonites had undergone in order to be able to worship as they saw fit. The importance of the factor of emigration in Mennonite history deserves an extensive analysis and in the opinion of this writer would shed much more light on the problem of Mennonite-Nazi relations in Germany than Zschäbitz' uninformed polemics.

> members even of the patriciate (Conrad Grebel in Zurich, Cornelis Flamink, Aafchen Listinks, Jakob and Johann van Vainssema, Johann Batenburg in the Netherlands, Bernhard Knipperdollinck and Hermann Tilbeck in Münster and others. The enumeration of similar examples could be considerably extended). But to deduce from this fact that Anabaptism was indifferent to the class conflict is to neglect its essence and the causal connections of the movement and to substitute a superficial analysis in its place. One must seek the causes in the total Reformation complex, in its regional and local conditions, in the forms in which the genesis and development of Anabaptism took place.[71]

As a matter of fact, Anabaptism had not had any precise theological formulation such as Lutheranism or even Zwinglianism; it had appeared almost simultaneously and independently in Zwickau and Zurich and had been caught in the peasant movement from which it drew its adherents.[72] The defeat of the peasants had confronted the Anabaptists with a new situation, however, and, as a result, their revolutionary ardor had turned into chiliastic expectations of the second coming of Christ, or else had manifested itself in acts of terrorism such as those of Bader or Römer. Münster, therefore, had been the last act of revolutionary Anabaptism.[73]

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[71] A.M. Tschistoswonow, "Die soziale Basis," WZdKMU, 14 (1965), 3, 407. Gerhard Brendler expressed a similar idea when he stated: "Weshalb haben die täuferischen Ideen gerade bei den niederen Schichten Aufnahme gefunden und nicht bei den Feudalherren oder beim wohlhabenden Bürgertum? Dass einige Täuferführer bürgerlichen Kreisen entstammten, ändert nichts am Gesamtbild." Das Täuferreich zu Münster, p. 57.

[72] Tschistoswonow, "Die soziale Basis," p. 409. This, according to Tschistoswonow, was true even of the Swiss Anabaptists: "In der Schweiz verknüpfte sich die Ausbreitung des Täufertums in seinem Epizentrum, dem Kanton Zürich, aber auch an anderen Orten eng mit dem scharfen sozialpolitischen Kampf der Bauernschaft in den Landgemeinden, der handwerklichplebejischen Schichten der Städte Zürich, Schaffhausen, Basel und den Ereignissen des Grossen Bauernkrieges in Deutschland . . . ." Ibid.

Günter Vogler, in a critique of George H. Williams' concept of a "Radical Reformation," demonstrated his dependence upon Zschäbitz[74] as did Gerhard Brendler after him.[75] Both accepted Zschäbitz' theory that Anabaptism had in reality been the 'reservoir of a diversified opposition to the ruling classes.' Zschäbitz, however, had made this assertion on the narrow basis of 138 Anabaptists of Central Germany whose vocations had been listed, and a misinterpretation of Peachy's study.[76] He correctly admitted that his chart could give no sure indication as to the adherents of Anabaptism for in most instances the documents did not give the vocation of the person in question. But what was more important, and about which Zschäbitz did not concern himself at all, was to establish the relative wealth of the Anabaptists questioned. Thus Zschäbitz simply assumed they had all belonged to the poor.

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[73] Ibid.

[74] Günter Vogler, "Gab es eine radikale Reformation?" WZdKMU, 14 (1965), 3, 495.

[75] Gerhard Brendler, Das Täuferreich zu Münster, p. 62.

[76] Zschäbitz, Wiedertäuferbewegung, pp. 155-56.

C. Shortcomings of the Marxist Sociological Approach

No matter how assiduously the Marxists have attempted to emphasize the class character of Anabaptism, the fact remains that most Anabaptists did not at first come from the lower classes; indeed, very few were drawn from the pre-proletariat or those destined to economic ruin, not to speak of the intellectual leaders, particularly in Switzerland, whom the Marxists continually exclude from their analysis as though they feared the power of ideas. And if the Marxist theory does not apply in all instances, it cannot be applied as a generalization, as Zschäbitz did, without a thorough investigation of all the material available. It is therefore not without significance that the very thorough study, in comparison to that of Zschäbitz, of Württemberg Anabaptism by Claus-Peter Clasen comes to conclusions which contradict outright the Marxist theory on a number of major points. Clasen points first of all to a few members of the nobility in the Württemberg region who had not only sympathized with Anabaptist views, but who had joined the cause.[77] He pointed further to numerous, not merely isolated examples of city bourgeoisie, often in leading positions, who had joined the Anabaptists.[78] In Esslingen he found 26 such rich bourgeoisie, in Schwäbisch-Gmünd 9, in Heilbronn 8, in Schwäbisch-Hall 1, and 16 others outside the free cities of the duchy.[79] Thus in Württemberg alone he found 60 Anabaptists who had belonged to the rich bourgeoisie, nearly one-half of all those mentioned by Zschäbitz for Central Germany. Furthermore, Clasen was able to trace 68 artisans in the free cities and 32 in cities belonging to the duchy as well as 96 more in the villages.[80] Of 51, Clasen was able to estimate the relative wealth. This indicated quite conclusively that ". . . the lower ranks of the artisans, the journeymen and the impoverished master craftsmen did not by any means constitute the majority. The most numerous group among the Anabaptist artisans was the master craftsmen with a moderate or even handsome income . . . ."[81] And of the 400 Anabaptists in the villages living off the land, only 70 belonged to the laboring ranks; 100 had some property but worked as laborers as well; 114 more belonged to the wealthy middle class peasants and 17 more to the richest of the peasants.[82] Realtively speaking, Clasen concluded, this division amongst the Anabaptists mirrored fairly accurately the social structure of Württemberg.

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[77] Clasen, Wiedertäufer, pp. 118-19.

[78] *Ibid.*, pp. 119-27.

[79] He summed these up in note 39, p. 127.

[80] *Ibid.*, p. 131.

Clasen therefore came to the following conclusions regarding the Marxist thesis: (1) In the 1520's when, according to the Marxists, Anabaptism was supposed to have been an underground political movement of the lower classes, the Anabaptists won a significant following among the upper bourgeoisie in Esslingen and some in other cities of Württemberg.[83] (2) In contradiction to the Marxist theory that Anabaptism found its adherents in those artisans whose positions were threatened by the new order of things, Clasen pointed to the fact that the Anabaptists had gained the majority of their members from the artisans of stable handicrafts.[84] Had Anabaptism really been the expression of the revolutionary pre-proletariat it should have found entrance into these elements most numerous in Augsburg, Frankfurt, and Nuremberg. Here, however, Anabaptism remained negligible.[85] In Esslingen, for example, of the 100 to 200 Anabaptists there during the heated political struggles of the 1520's between the feudal vineyard owners and their tenants, no Anabaptist was found on the side of the revolutionary tenants. On the other hand, the Lutheran tenants were in the forefront of the social and political agitation. In contrast to these Lutheran tenants, Anabaptists were being led to the martyr's pyre.[86] (3) With regard to the peasants, Clasen concluded that it was simply untrue that Anabaptism had become a movement of the poverty-stricken peasants and day-laborers, for a majority of the Anabaptist peasants in Württemberg had belonged to the middle class independent peasants.[87]

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[81] Ibid., p. 133.

[82] Ibid., pp. 137-39.

[83] Ibid., p. 122.

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[84] Ibid., p. 132.

[85] Ibid., pp. 132-33.

[86] Ibid., p. 135. Eduard Widmoser, "Das Täufertum in Tiroler Unterland" (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Innsbruck, 1948), p. 37, came to the same conclusion for Tyrol: ". . . Durch die Knappenschaft kam wohl ein unruhiges, fremdes Element in die Bevölkerung. Sie neigte aber mehr dem Luthertum zu und kaum dem Täufertum, das von ihr zu viele Opfer verlangte, vor allem dem Verlust des Arbeitsplatzes. In Tirol fand das Täufertum seine grösste Anhängerschaft im Bauern- und Handwerkerstand . . . ."

These were not the only conclusions Clasen reached with regard to the Marxist sociological theory concerning Anabaptism, however. Zschäbitz had asserted that the social structure of Anabaptism had changed after Münster, thereafter attracting only the petite bourgeoisie. With a wealth of detailed evidence, Clasen demonstrated that precisely the opposite was true! After 1535, when, according to the Marxists, Anabaptism had rejected all revolutionary tendencies, one could no longer find any bourgeois elements among the Esslinger Anabaptists.[88] After 1540 Esslingen experienced an economic crisis due to the systematic boycott of its textile manufactures by the dukes of Württemberg. This hit the artisans especially hard and resulted in their increasing impoverishment. As a result, many left the city. Yet despite the fact that Anabaptism had flourished in this city and Anabaptist propaganda continued unabated in its environs, Anabaptism vanished from the city during this economic crisis. Meanwhile, however, it spread out into the surrounding villages where it found its most rapid growth in numbers.[89] As a matter of fact, seen as a whole, the Anabaptist movement in Württemberg after 1570 changed predominantly into a movement of the lower classes, not into a sect of fairly wealthy peasants. Clasen concluded: ". . . In absolute contradiction to the Marxist thesis, the lower class elements became stronger in the Anabaptist movement in the course of the century, rather than less. There can be no question but that Anabaptism in Württemberg did not change from a movement of the lower classes into a pious sect of wealthy peasants."[90]

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[87] Clasen, Wiedertäufer, p. 135.

[88] Ibid., p. 122.

[89] Ibid., p. 135-36.

At the very least, therefore, Clasen's exemplary study makes the Marxist presuppositions seem questionable indeed and points to the fact that one cannot generalize from so superficial an analysis as that of Zschäbitz. But if the Marxist presuppositions concerning the social structure of Anabaptism are wrong, then Zschäbitz' conclusion, that Anabaptism was an underground political movement of opposition to the ruling classes, drawn on the basis of this assumed social structure, must be wrong as well, as, moreover, Clasen's study demonstrates. Therefore, Zschäbitz' attempt to read 'objective opposition' to the ruling classes into every Anabaptist tenet of faith and practice must also be construed as erroneous, being merely another case of a logical deduction from an erroneous premise.

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[90] *Ibid.*, p. 142.

A further Marxist deduction from this erroneous premise was that Anabaptism had become pacifistic only after the defeat of the peasants and the cruel annihilation of the Münsterite Anabaptists. Clasen's study has already put this deduction in a very questionable light. It is certainly false for the Zurich Anabaptists around Conrad Grebel. In his famous letter to Thomas Müntzer of September 5, 1524, Grebel wrote: ". . . Heuiuf's brother writes that you have preached against the princes and that one should attack them. If it is true, or if you intend to defend war . . . or anything else which cannot be supported in the explicit Word of God—and you will not find this advocated there—I admonish you at the peril of your very salvation to refrain from it . . . ."[91] Theoretically, therefore, at least the leaders of the Swiss Anabaptists had no intention of becoming implicated in revolution or even of advocating any kind of social revolution.[92]

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[91] Conrad Grebel and friends to Thomas Müntzer, September 5, 1524, Quellen zur Geschichte der Täufer in der Schweiz, vol.I (Zurich, 1952), 20, edited by Leonhard von Muralt and Walter Schmid. (Hereafter cited as Quellen, Schweiz.)

[92] Seven of the leading Swiss Anabaptists signed. See ibid., p. 21.

But what about their followers? Undoubtedly Anabaptism cannot have played a causative role in the Peasant War, as perhaps Thomas Müntzer's teachings did in Thuringia,[93] because the movement only became more than a conventicle after the first adult baptism in January of 1525.[94] At the most, therefore, one can only speak of an involvement in the Peasant War. Even at that, Anabaptism appeared in Basel and Bern only after the Peasant War and not during or even before it; and in the entire region, Zollikon excluded,[95] only some 30 peasants appeared in court before 1527 accused of being Anabaptists.[96] Peachy has pursued the problem and has come to the conclusion that the only place where Anabaptism intermingled with the Peasant War was in Hallau close to the scene of the peasant uprising on the Swiss-German border. In February, 1525, one of the Zurich group, Hans Brötli, came into this region to win converts to Anabaptism.[97] When the authorities in neighboring Schaffhausen demanded the surrender of Brötli, the peasants rose to defend him, yet in the former's letters to Zollikon there is nothing to indicate that Brötli became involved in the peasant movement although he was impressed by the poverty of the peasants. The peasants, however, must at least have believed Brötli and the Anabaptists to be on their side and therefore protected him.[98] Only in one case did an Anabaptist actually confess to have participated actively in the Peasant War.[99] It is clear, however, and Peachy admits as much time and again, that the radical doctrines of the Anabaptists which in essence upset the social order of the time added to the turmoil in the hearts and minds of many suffering under real or imagined burdens. The actual participation in the Peasant War was negligible, however, which is all the more impressive because Anabaptism in Switzerland found its greatest expansion precisely during and shortly after the social upheaval of 1525.

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[93] To claim, as the Marxists and some others do, that because there are similarities between the ideas of Müntzer and the Swiss Anabaptists they both belong in one pot, is meaningless. One could, and has, found similarities between Müntzer's and Luther's thought, in fact it has been argued that Müntzer's thought was developed on the basis of Luther's Reformation theology. Yet no one would place these two in one category. As a matter of fact, were one to stretch one's imagination just a little, one could find 'similarities' among all Christian groups. It is much more meaningful to speak of concrete influences, interactions and the like which can be traced. Therefore we shall refrain from calling Müntzer an Anabaptist because he never rebaptized, nor was he concerned about building a separatistic church as were the Zurich Anabaptists. His concept of the Kingdom of God was an all inclusive one and for that reason he advocated the extinction of those who opposed his teachings. His concept came much closer to that of the Old Testament people of God than anything else. Therefore, although he was against infant baptism, it is highly dubious whether Müntzer would ever have practised adult baptism because it simply does not fit into his concept of the Kingdom of God on earth. That the transition could be made, by such men as Hans Hut and Melchior Rinck, however, should teach us to keep our eyes open to the influences of the one upon the other and the interaction of the two sets of ideas as the movement spread northward.

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[94] Peachy, Die soziale Herkunft, p. 55.

[95] Zollikon was the home of the first Anabaptist congregation. See Fritz Blanke, Brüder in Christo (Zürich, 1955).

[96] Peachy, Die soziale Herkunft, p. 55.

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[97] It is true that the Zurich Anabaptists also advocated the abolition of the small 'tenth.' This may well have played into the hands of the revolting peasants although J.F. Gerhard Goeters, Ludwig Hätzer (Gütersloh, 1957), p. 32, does not believe so. "Immer wieder hat man diese Ereignisse missverstanden, indem man von einer nur sozialen Bewegung sprach. In Wirklichkeit handelt es sich um den Versuch kirchlicher Reformen. Es ist nämlich zu beachten, dass alle Zehntenverweigerungen und--beschwerden sich gegen kirchliche Institutionen richten, das Grossmünsterstift, das Fraumünsterstift, das Chorherrenstift in Embrach . . . Strittig sind nicht die Steuerverpflichtungen im allgemeinen, so dass man von sozialen Tendenzen mit dem Ziel eigener Besserstellung sprechen könnte, sondern in aller Regel nur die kleinen, die sog 'geistlichen' Zehnten, also ausgesprochen kirchliche Steuern. Selbst diese will man zahlen, beklagt sich aber über nicht stiftungsgemässe Verwendung der Einkünfte. Der kleine Zehnte sei zur Unterstützung der Prediger und zur Armenpflege bestimmt, so lautet ein häufig wiederkehrendes Argument. Dazu will man ihn verwendet wissen. Dass hinter diesen Äusserungen reformatorische Gedanken über die Kirche und ihre Einrichtungen und Funktionen stehen, bedarf keiner weiteren Erläuterung."

What about Anabaptism in other regions? It is a well-known fact that Hubmaier in Waldshut did not share the opinion of his Zurich friends concerning the 'sword' and that, as a result, Waldshut joined the peasants in their war against the Habsburgs.[100] Hubmaier and Waldshut were in the minority in this view, however, and it is interesting to note that two Anabaptists in this group refused to participate in the conflict. Jakob Gross[101] and Ulrich Teck were consequently forced to leave Waldshut, but the Peasant War had made the participation in war a burning issue in Waldshut.[102] The example in Waldshut demonstrates quite explicitly that the decision for or against the sword rested largely with the personal convictions of the Anabaptist leaders. Nor does Hubmaier seem to have changed his views on the subject after the defeat of the peasants and his forced departure from Waldshut. Quite on the contrary, we find him arguing against Hans Hut, the former part-time associate of Müntzer turned pacifist, that one must fight on the side of the authorities if they so require.[103] Thus neither Hubmaier's position nor that of the Swiss Anabaptists with regard to the sword was influenced in the least by the defeat of the peasants.[104]

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[98] Peachy, Die soziale Herkunft, pp. 55-63.

[99] Ibid., pp. 63-64.

[100] See Franz, Bauernkrieg, p. 103; Williams, Radical Reformation, pp. 64-68; and Torsten Bergsten, Balthasar Hubmaier seine Stellung zu Reformation und Täufertum (Kassel, 1961), pp. 277-301.

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[101] Toward the end of 1526 Gross was captured in Strasburg where he confessed: ". . . Sey von Waltshut kommen und abscheiden müssen umb das willen, dass er nit mit inen haben wollen zu den buren gen Zell zu ziehen . . . Sagt auch, was der oberkait zustehe, das [woll] er halten und für sein person wider kein oberkait nie willens zu setzen, etc.; wolle wachen, hüten, harnisch anlegen, den spies in die handt nehmen: des sper er sich gar nit; aber die leuth zu todt zu schlagen, dass sey in keim gebott gots geschriben . . . ." Manfred Krebs und Hans Georg Rott, hrsg., Quellen zur Geschichte der Täufer, VII. Band, Elsass, I. Teil (Gütersloh, 1959), p. 64.

[102] Gunnar Westin, Introduction to Balthasar Hubmaier Schriften, Gunnar Westin and Torsten Bergsten, eds.(Gütersloh, 1962), p. 28.

[103] Ibid., p. 40.

We cannot pursue the problem in any detail here, but we shall present a general summary. The farther away from Zurich one looks, the later the Anabaptists appear on the scene.[105] Hence the crucial conjunction of Peasant War and Anabaptism took place in Switzerland and Upper Germany. Except for Hubmaier and Waldshut, however, the two remained separated movements. Toward the end of 1526, for example, Anabaptism came into the region of the Tyrol,[106] but already in 1525 Georg Blaurock and Felix Mantz, both Swiss Anabaptists, had begun to win adherents here.[107] Widmoser, who turned his attention to this region, asserted that the Anabaptists would sooner have pacified the populace than incited it to revolt.[108] The same was certainly true of Southern Germany, as a perusal of the Anabaptist documents[109] and Clasen's study shows.

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[104] It should be stated in this regard as well that Smirin's assumption that Ludwig Hätzer had been implicated in the Peasant War has been denied by his biographer Goeters, Ludwig Hätzer, pp. 55-56.

[105] See especially Wolfgang Schäufele, Das Missionarische Bewüsstsein und Wirken der Täufer (Neukirchen Vluyn, 1966), pp. 15-37.

[106] In contradiction to Smirin, who had attempted to make the Anabaptists the carriers of the revolutionary ideas in Upper Germany, Eduard Widmoser, Das Taufertum im Tiroler Unterland, p. 34, pointed out that: "Der Tiroler Bauer kehrte sich jedoch von dem fremden lutherischen Predigern ab, weil er in ihnen die Anstifter der Gewalttätigkeiten und Greuel des Aufstandes zu sehen glaubte. Die 'dürren' Predikanten, die von aussen ins Land kamen, wurden nach dem furchtbaren Ende des Bauernkrieges immer weniger . . . ." The same kind of Lutheran Prädikanten were probably active in Upper Germany as well, as Fridolin Siecher had asserted in his chronicle.

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[107] Ibid., p. 36.

[108] "Die zahlreichen Misstände bei Kirche und Klerus, der angehäufte Groll des Volkes gegen die unwürdigen Vertreter der Kirche, die religiöse Unwissenheit der Bevölkerung, die durch das Luthertum geschürte Abfallbewegung von der alten Kirche, der blutige Zusammenbruch des Bauernaufstandes, der weder eine religiöse noch eine soziale Besserung brachte, der Abscheu gegen die im Aufstand verübten Greuel- und Gewalttaten, den lutherischen Predigern in die Schuhe geschoben, das ungestillte religiöse Bedürfnis des einfachen Mannes bereiteten dem Boden für die Saat der Täuferbewegung vor, die den Schein eines ernsten und sittlichen Lebens besass und die aufgewühlten Gemüter des Volkes nicht zur offenen Gewalt aufpeitschte, sondern es verstand, die aufgestauten sozialen Spannungen in die Bahnen einer religiösen Inbrunst und Schwärmerei umzulenken, die auch bereit war, die Verkündigung des Gotteswortes mit dem Blute zu bekrätigen." Ibid., p. 35.

[109] I hope to attempt a more detailed analysis of the problem in a future study. Here I would like to note merely that only very isolated and unrewarding references are made to the Peasant War in the various volumes of the recently edited Anabaptist documents (Quellen zur Geschichte der Täufer). For a list of these volumes see the bibliography.

The picture changes the further north one moves into Central Germany and down the Rhine, however. This was not least of all due to the intellectual climate of these regions which Anabaptism encountered. Central Germany, of course, had been influenced by Müntzer, and his ideas remained behind him to haunt the hopeful minds of men for some time after his death. In 1526, Hans Hut, the former friend and associate of Thomas Müntzer was baptized by Hans Denck in Augsburg.[110] Upon rebaptism, Hut returned to Franconia and Southern Thuringia late in 1526 where he preached for a time.[111] But the leading figure in the Anabaptist movement of Central Germany was Melchior Rinck, also a former disciple of Müntzer, who was particularly effective in winning converts to the Anabaptist cause in parts of Hesse and Thuringia.[112] Although both Hut and Rinck converted to Anabaptism, substantial remnants of Müntzerian ideas remained, especially in the radical chiliasm of Hans Hut.[113] But not only did both Hut and Rinck come from a somewhat Müntzerian background, Denck, who baptized Hut and probably Rinck as well, had also been influenced by Müntzer.[114] This factor undoubtedly made the transition from revolutionary chiliasm to spiritual Anabaptism easier. It might not be amiss to recall in this connection Müntzer's last letter to the citizens of Mühlhausen where he rejected revolution as a means of inaugurating the Kingdom of God on earth for the future. Hut may have gone through a similar experience even before he met Denck and was baptized by him. This chiliasm, however, still remained revolutionary, only now God would be the initiator of revenge, not man.

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[110] Williams, Radical Reformation, p. 162.

[111] John S. Oyer, Lutheran Reformers against Anabaptists (The Hauge, 1965), p. 48.

[112] Williams, Radical Reformation, p. 435. It is probable, although there seems to be no conclusive evidence for the fact, that Rinck was brought into the Anabaptist fold by Hans Denck who also baptized Hut. See Ruth Weiss, "Die Herkunft der osthessischen Täufer," ARG, 50 (1959), 1/2, 7.

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[113] The argument as to whether Hut was a revolutionary chiliast and to what extent he remained bound to Müntzer's ideas despite his rebaptism, has been debated long and vigorously. The attempt by Herbert Klassen, "The Life and Teachings of Hans Hut," The Mennonite Quarterly Review, XXXIII (1959), 3, 171-205, and 4, 276-305 (hereafter cited as MQR), to make Hut into a pacifist and to emphasize his break with Müntzer is not convincing. Gordon Rupp, "Thomas Müntzer, Hans Huth and the 'Gospel of all Creatures,'" Bulletin of the John Rylands Library, 43 (1960-61), 492-519, argues convincingly for a close relationship of ideas between Hut and Müntzer even after the former's conversion, p. 162. The latest article on Hut: James M. Stayer, "Hans Hut's Doctrine of the Sword; an attempted Solution," MQR, 39 (1965), 3, 181-91, argues that Hut's theme of eschatological revenge could just as easily have ended in another Münster had other factors been equal.

[114] See especially Georg Baring, "Hans Denck und Thomas Müntzer in Nürnberg 1524," ARG, 50 (1959), 145-81.

The same radicalization of the Anabaptist teachings is apparent the further one moves down the Rhine as well. Goeters has pointed to the presence of Sacramentarian views in the Rhine region as the cause for this phenomenon.[115] In Hessen the same is true where, in certain regions, the influence of Melchior Hoffmann was strongly apparent.[116] Thus, according to Goeters, Anabaptist apostles from the Netherlands arrived in Münster in January of 1534 and baptized the Sacramentarians of Münster.[117]

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[115] J.F. Gerhard Goeters, "Die Rolle des Täufertums in der Reformationsgeschichte des Niederrheins," Rheinische Vierteljahrsblätter, 24 (1959), 3/4, 224.

[116] Ruth Weiss, "Herkunft und Sozialanschauungen der Täufergemeinden im westlichen Hessen," ARG, 52 (1961), 186, has stated: "Das westhessische Täufertum ist bestimmt durch die Einflüsse, die besonders durch die beiden auswärtigen Täuferapostel, Peter Tesch und Leonhard Fälber, aus dem Herzogtum Jülich in hessisches Gebiet gelangt sind, also durch eine Richtung des Täufertums, die in ihren Anfängen auf Melchior Hoffmann zurückgeht, dessen Gedanken und Formulierungen sich auch in den Schriften der westhessischen Täufer nachweisen lassen, die aber mannigfache Einflüsse in sich aufgenommen hat, die sich nicht mehr im einzelnen aufzeigen lassen."

In contrast to the western parts of Hesse, Weiss asserted that ideas of those of the eastern region had been determined ". . . hauptsächlich von Franken und Mähren . . . ," p. 163.

Therefore the essential problem that faces us with regard to Anabaptism and the Peasant War the further we are removed from Zurich is whether or not, and this is especially true of Thuringia, the revolutionaries of 1525 joined the Anabaptist movement once it was brought into their region by wandering apostles. In Thuringia and Franconia, as we have seen, two former followers of Müntzer who had joined the Anabaptist movement returned to preach the new teachings in the regions of Müntzer's greatest influence. How did these newly won converts to the Anabaptist movement look back upon the Peasant War when confronted by the authorities? A number of such confrontations have been recorded for us.[118] One of the questions asked was whether or not the Peasant War had been a godly one.[119] Of fifteen questioned, seven had participated in the Peasant War but none asserted that it had been godly. One, indeed, stated that the uprising had been made for 'temporal reasons' and had therefore been unjust; had it been made for the sake of the Gospel, however, he did not know whether it would have been just or not.[120] A number of others claimed they had been misled by two men named Adam Craft and Heinrich Rab and had never really understood what it had all been about. They were unanimous, however, in rejecting revolution for the future.[121]

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[117] Goeters, "Die Rolle des Täufertums," p. 224.

[118] Günter Franz, et al., Urkundliche Quellen zur hessischen Reformationsgeschichte. Wiedertäuferakten 1527-1626 (Marburg, 1951).

[119] No. 28, August, 1533: "Verhör der Wiedertäufer zu Sorge bei Hersfeld," ibid., p. 64.

On the other hand, however, there were men like Hans Römer, Müntzer's companion on the latter's trip to Nuremberg, who had been baptized by Hut but considered Müntzer his father and who, together with his band (Bund) of followers, planned the destruction of Erfurt only to be discovered just before the plan could be implemented. Yet Römer admitted members to his group through baptism and upon the promise of living a good Christian life and refraining from revolution.[122] Obviously the two movements had merged here and caused not a little confusion.

It should be clear, therefore, that the pacifism of the Swiss Anabaptists was not caused by the defeat of the peasants. Before ever the peasants were defeated, the idea of pacifism had come into conflict with its counterpart in Waldshut. Those who withdrew from Waldshut did so on principle, not for any sociological reason. The defeat of the peasants may well have convinced many that the Christian way was a pacifistic way, but as we have seen, except where other influences and other ideas had worked in upon Anabaptism, as in Thuringia and on the Rhine, those elements that remained revolutionary in a social sense did not join the Anabaptist movement. The causes for such uprisings as Münster lie in their chiliastic expectations, and to what extent these expectations were motivated by economic conditions is a moot point. In any case, however, Anabaptism was not first and foremost a sociological phenomenon by any stretch of the imgaination; it was a religious phenomenon. To neglect the spread of Anabaptist ideas which accompanied, or better, resulted in actual tangible rebaptisms, as the Marxists do, is to neglect a very real means of tracing the spread of Anabaptism. That these teachings were modified by various other factors, especially in Central Germany by the heritage of Müntzer's ideas, is clear. To this connection we must now return.

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[120] Ibid., p. 67.

[121] In how far they really meant this must remain a matter of speculation. Ibid., pp. 64-72.

[122] Oyer, Lutheran Reformers, pp. 96-97.

D. Zwickau or Zurich

The spread of Anabaptism from Zurich makes it clear where Anabaptism originated. Nor is the place of origin any longer in doubt; the debate has turned to one of possible influences Müntzer may have had on the Swiss Anabaptists.[123] The differences between Zwingli and the radicals, on the question of baptism especially, had become acute before Müntzer's writings ever came into the hands of the Zurich group.[124] Grebel's letters to his brother-in-law, Vadian, in St. Gall make it clear, as Vadian's biographer has pointed out,[125] that the tension had been building up between the Grebel faction and Zwingli for some time. The issues were too formidable not to have aroused Grebel who, as Näf further pointed out, may not have been quite as calm about the whole matter as Bender has portrayed him.[126] Grebel appears to have been a man seeking confirmation of his views outside his circle of friends before making the final break with Zwingli. It was in this context that Müntzer's tracts, especially his "Protestation" with its reference to the corruption of the early Church being due to infant baptism, must have impressed Grebel and his group. Yet despite the fact that Grebel and his group sought confirmation of their views from a third party, they also set out to criticize Müntzer on a number of points.[127] Precisely how great Müntzer's influence was, however, must remain unknown. It is very likely that Grebel and the Swiss Brethren would have proceeded to take the final steps toward adult baptism even had they not heard of Müntzer.

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[123] We cannot cite all the literature pertinent to the problem here; it would lead us too far afield. Hans J. Hillerbrand, "Origins of 16th Century Anabaptism," ARG, 53 (1962), 1/2, 152-80, has put it as follows: ". . . To be sure, the energetic attempts of some scholars to dissociate the relatively tame Zürich beginnings from the violent and eruptive characteristics of Thomas Müntzer has in recent years found widespread acceptance. This attempt is challenged, however, particularly in Europe, by those who would see the Anabaptist movement more in the light of Karl Holl's essay on Luther and the Schwärmer, insisting on similarities and common characteristics between Allstedt and Zürich . . . ," p. 155. See also the statement by Gordon Rupp, "Thomas Müntzer, Hans Huth and the 'Gospel of all Creatures,'" p. 501, where he stated: "It was understandable and proper for Mennonite scholars to expose an ancient calumny which from the time of Melanchthon and Bullinger sought to discredit the Anabaptists by fathering the movement on Thomas Müntzer. None the less, the evidence continues to suggest a real link between him and the south German Anabaptists . . . ."

[124] See John H. Yoder, Täufertum und Reformation in der Schweiz. Die Gespräche zwischen Täufern und Reformatoren 1523-1538 (Weierhof/Pfalz, 1962), p. 168.

[125] Werner Näf, Vadian, vol. II (St. Gallen, 1952), pp. 223-24.

At the same time Grebel wrote to Müntzer, he also wrote to Carlstadt and Luther. Carlstadt immediately sent his son-in-law, Dr. Gerhard Westerburg, to Zurich, and arrived there himself toward the end of October.[128] Martin Cellarius also came to Zurich, whether before or after is not clear, and contacted the Swiss Anabaptists, especially Felix Mantz.[129] If he arrived in Zurich before the September letters of the Swiss Brethren, it may well be that Cellarius, who had been so taken in by the Zwickau Prophets,[130] bridged the gap between the Zurich radicals and Müntzer and Carlstadt. Cellarius was to have taken part in the first major disputation concerning the problem of infant baptism in Zurich of January, 1525, but apparently left before the disputation took place.[131] The next we hear of him is that he was causing 'trouble' in Prussia.[132] Apparently he was still a radical chiliast, for in Prussia he had an exchange of ideas with Paul Speratus in which the latter accused Cellarius of harboring Müntzerian ideas.[133] What influence he had on the Anabaptists in Zurich, however, remains unclear. In this regard it is important to remember that despite the fact that there were similarities and contacts between Zwickau and Zurich, neither Cellarius nor Carlstadt became Anabaptists. Cellarius, indeed, retained his scepticism regarding the validity of infant baptism, but he never considered taking the logical step as a result of these doubts. He was too much of a Spirtualist. It is very probable that Müntzer would not have accepted the consequences the Zurich Anabaptists drew from their doubts concerning infant baptism either. That the transition could be made from the chiliastic Spiritualism of Müntzer and Cellarius, however, is shown by the fact that the two movements merged in Thuringia due to the influence of two former Müntzer followers: Rinck and Hut.

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[126] _Ibid_., p. 223. See Harold S. Bender, _Conrad Grebel_ (Goshen, Ind., 1950).

[127] See the letter, mentioned previously, in _Quellen, Schweiz_, pp. 14-21.

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[128] See the discussion by Hillerbrand, "Origins," pp. 163-65.

[129] Martin Riggenbach, "Martin Borrhaus (Cellarius) ein Sonderling aus der Reformationszeit," Basler Jahrbuch (1900), p. 57 ff. Regarding Cellarius' arrival in Zurich, Riggenbach only stated: ". . . dass er sich von Stuttgart etwa im Jahre 1524 zunächst in die Schweiz begeben hat . . . ," p. 57.

[130] Paul Wappler, "Thomas Müntzer und die 'Zwickauer Propheten,'" p. 65, where he states: ". . . Von denen aber, die Stübner für seine Ideen vollständig einnahm, war der hervorragendste der Schwabe Martin Cellarius (Borrhaus), der auch später noch lange hartnäckig die Sache der Zwickauer vertrat."

[131] "Es scheint, dass er auch an der ersten Disputation Zwinglis mit den Wiedertäufern, am 17. Januar 1525, hätte Teil nehmen sollen, sich aber vorher aus dem Staube gemacht hat . . . ." Riggenbach, Martin Borrhaus, p. 58.

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[132] Johannes Brismann wrote to Luther on June 16, 1525: ". . . Venit ad nos Marinus Cellarius, qui ante tres annos cum Storco et Marco, prophetis illis, Wittembergam deferens abiit. Homo est imo homuncio ineloquibilis iactantie spiritus sui . . . ." M. Johann Erhard Kappens, Kleine Nachlese Einiger grössten Theils noch ungedruckter, zur Erläuterung der Reformations--Geschichte nützlicher Urkunden (Leipzig, 1727).

[133] Paul Tschackert, Urkundenbuch zur Reformationsgeschichte des Herzogtums Preussen. Publicationes aus den K. Preussischen Staatsarchiven, vol. 2 (Leipzig, 1890), No. 421 and 422, pp. 143-44.

The Marxists are therefore justified in their polemics against Bender and other Mennonite historians who have continually attempted to withdraw the Anabaptist movement from every semblance of Müntzerian influence. Yet we cannot agree with the Marxists that there are two centers of Anabaptism: Zwickau and Zurich. Anabaptism appeared in Thuringia only in 1526 and was imported from without. Undoubtedly, however, Müntzerian influence modified Thuringian Anabaptism considerably.

All that needs to be said here concerning Bullinger's thesis of the causal connection between Müntzer's visit in Southern Germany and the rise of Anabaptism in Zurich, a thesis long propounded by the Marxists after Zimmermann had used it to extend Müntzer's influence into the regions where the Peasant War originated, is that Heinold Fast has demonstrated quite conclusively that Bullinger used this theory, which he found in the writings of Melanchthon, to remove the stigma of Anabaptist origins from Zurich, the home of the Zwinglian Reformation.[134] Unless new evidence is found to the contrary, therefore, Müntzer's alleged rendezvous with the Zurich Anabaptists on the Swiss-German border must ever remain within the realm of speculation. Even if it did take place, Müntzer apparently did not exert any revolutionary influence on the Swiss Brethren as their non-participation in the Peasant War demonstrates.

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[134] Heinold Fast, Bullinger und die Täufer, pp. 89-132.

Ludwig Keller's theory of the Waldensian origins of Swiss Anabaptism, which the Marxists have accepted in a somewhat sociologically changed form, rests, as Keller himself stated, on the arguments of the Mennonites,[135] especially of the Dutch Mennonites.[136] Keller noted quite correctly that Tieleman Van Bracht, Het Bloedig Toonel of Martelaers Spiegel der Doopsgesinde of Weereloose Christenen,[137] had been one of the first to propound this thesis.[138] The origins of the theory needs to be investigated, but it may be stated here with some certainty that the Mennonites probably accepted the theory for the same reason that some Protestant Church historians today see the 'true church of Jesus Christ' not in the Medieval Roman Catholic Church but in the heretical sects of the time, such as the Waldensians. The Mennonites viewed themselves as in a direct line of descent in this 'true church' tradition not least of all because of their 'theology of martyrdom'[139] which postulated that the true church would always be the suffering church. This thesis obviously applied to the Waldensians as well as to the Mennonites. The conclusion that one was the successor of the other could be very easily reached. There may, of course, be some truth in this thesis, yet it is an intangible kind of truth which cannot be demonstrated by the naked facts of history.

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[135] "Seit dem Moment aber, wo die Religionsfreiheit erkämpft war—es geschah dies zuerst in Holland im 17. Jahrhundert—haben die Nachfolger und Gesinnungsgenossen der alten 'Täufer,' die inzwischen den Namen Mennoniten angenommen hatten, es einstimmig und mit aller Bestimmtheit öffentlich ausgesprochen, dass ihre Gemeinschaft dieselbe Kirche sei, welche längst vor der Reformation als 'Ketzer' und 'Sektierer' verfolgt wurden, und dass den Männern, die seit 1522 die 'Gemeinden' erneuert hätten, nichts ferner gelegen habe, als eine neue Kirche zu begründen.

"Die sämmtlichen älteren Chroniken dieser Partei, welche unter dem Titel der 'Märtyrerbücher' bekannt sind, heben ausdrücklich hervor, dass die sogenannten 'Täufer' seit vielen hundert Jahren in der Christenheit vorhanden gewesen und keineswegs erst seit 1523 aufgekommen seien.

"Dieselbe Tradition ist dann allen kirchengeschichtlichen Werken, soweit sie aus der Partei der 'Taufgesinnten' hervor gegangen sind, seit dem 17. Jahrhundert bis auf unsere Zeit festgehalten worden." Keller, Die Reformation, p. 397.

[136] See ibid., note 2.

[137] Amsterdam, 1685, 2nd edition.

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[138] Van Bracht, quoting from Jacobi Mehrningi, *Baptism. histor*. (Hoogduytsch, editie van Dortmond 1646 en 1647), p. 22, stated: "Uyt dese Bohemische en Mehrische Oud-Waldensische Broederen, zijn hier na voort—(1) gekomen eenige voortreffelijke Mannen: als, onder andere, Hans Koch en Leonhard Meyster, dewelke Anno . . . beyde tot Ausborg zijn omgebracht, et, Baptism. histor . . . pag. 748.

"(Ludovicus Hätzer was van de gemente der Waldensen, welks heylsaem geloove wy elders getoont heb) . . . .

"(Dese Johannes Hut en de voorgenoemde Ludovicus waren van de oude Waldensischen Broederen. Siet Bapt. hist. Jacobi Mehrningi, het 2. deel, pag. 743, etc.)."

[139] Ethelbert Stauffer, "Märtyrertheologie und Täuferbewegung," *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte*, 52 (1933), 545-98.

The Marxists have attempted to demonstrate that Anabaptism was a forceful lower class ideological expression during, but especially after, the Peasant War. By so doing they have tried to lend credence to their theory that Luther's Reformation was in essence a bourgeois movement opposed to the masses. Their thesis of the dual origins of Anabaptism supports this theory as well in that both centers of the bourgeois Reformation, Wittemberg and Zurich, brought forth similar radical wings. The theory is too neat and tidy for all the facts to fit into place, however. Neither Anabaptism nor Lutheranism were class ideologies: they were religious attempts to come to grips with the teachings of God's Word in a given historical context.

CHAPTER X

REVOLUTION AND REFORMATION

The Marxists have attempted to reduce Peasant War and Reformation to a common secular denominator: the *frühbürgerliche Revolution*. In the process of reduction, however, they have added contradiction to contradiction primarily because they have analyzed this transition era by means of a wrong set of categories.[1] They have proceeded from a principle whereas they should have proceeded from the facts: the principle being that modes of production are mutually exclusive. Added to this mutual exclusiveness of the modes of production are the class conflicts between the owners of the means of production and those exploited by these means. The seeming truths these categories revealed when applied to capitalistic society have enticed the Marxists to apply the same categories to other periods. Applied to Medieval society, the theory of the class struggle may still seem to have some relevancy, but when the Marxists assert that the capitalistic mode of production was inherently antagonistic to the feudal mode of production, whatever they may understand by this, they miss the essential point entirely. Feudalism was based on an agrarian society, industry, of course, is not. Therefore the two could and in fact did exist side by side. According to the Marxists, however, these two modes of production should have entered into a life-and-death struggle in the period of transition from feudalism to capitalism.

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[1] Jean Delumeau, *Naissance et Affirmation de La Réforme* (Paris, 1965), p. 267, has stated: "Ainsi, la conception marxiste de la Réforme a péché par anachronisme, en transposant dans le XVI^{e} siècle des réalités et des conflits du XIX^{e}. Les rapports entre la foi et la mentalité des foules liu ont échappé. Ne voir dans les débats religieux que des epiphénomènes, des 'fioritures,' comme l'a écrit Corr. Bargaballo, c'est se refuser à comprendre pourquoi 15000 Calvinistes acceptèrent de mourir de faim à La Rochelle durant le siège de 1628."

The fallacy of this abstract assumption is proven by the concrete facts, however. Certainly there were frictions between the emerging cities and the nobles or bishops who claimed rights of rule and taxation over the towns. This was not caused by an antagonistic mode of production, however, rather it was motivated by the desire of the princes to gain political control over a financially lucrative venture and to consolidate their power over a given region. But not only did the nobles attempt to gain political control over the new centers of trade and commerce, many of the landed nobility moved to the cities, donned the robes of a merchant, married a bourgeois daughter, and took up the life of a merchant. On the other hand, nor did the bourgeoisie find itself in exclusive antagonism to the nobility despite the fact that it frequently tried to free itself from the political control of nobles and bishops alike. Much more it aspired to noble status and landed property in order to invest the money it had gained in commercial ventures.[2]

Unlike the Marxists, non-Marxists do not speak of a capitalistic mode of production in this period. The attempts, especially of Smirin and Grugorian, to discover the beginnings of a capitalistic mode of production in 16th-century Germany have their value but they do not explain the nature of the capitalism of the period. Insofar as one can speak of capitalism at all, one must speak of a commercial capitalism.[3] This means, of course, that the theory of contradictory modes of production became an historical force only with the beginning of the Industrial Revolution. At any rate, the bourgeoisie that constituted the historical force of the time was one involved in trade and commerce, not manufacture.

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[2] These facts have been pointed to often enough. Even A.D. Epstein pointed to the following passage in von Martin's Soziologie der Renaissance: "Für die Renaissanceentwicklung charakteristisch aber ist nun eine weitgehende Assimilierung des Adels an die neuen Verhältnisse, die Eingliederung des Adels in die Stadt. Der Landadel, soweit er sich nicht in ritterlichen Fehden und ritterlichen Aufwand zugrune richtet, wird stadtsässig, geht zu kommerzieler Tätigkeit über, erwirbt damit Reichtum und auf dessen Grundlage neue politische Macht, wird allmählich auch seinem Wesen, Fühlen und Denken nach Bürger—so dass der 'Bourgeois' nun zu einem von der Herkunft unabhängigen Typus wird—, verschwägert sich mit der städtischen Patriziern und bildet mit ihnen zusammen eine exklusive Handelsaristokratie. Die Neigung nicht adliger Familien, ihren durch Gewerbbetrieb und Handel erworbenen Reichtum in Grundbesitz anzulegen—im Interesse des Prestiges ihrer Firma und ihrer eigenen Feudalisierung: vielleicht nachdem sie den adligen Grundbesitzer ausgewuchert hatten—beförderte jenen Vershmelzungsprozess aus dem sich eine völlige Neubildung der gesellschaftlichen Oberschicht ergab, eine neue Aristokratie des Talents und des Willens (anstelle der alten der Geburt und des Standes), die zunächst wirtschaftliche und politischkriegerische Tüchtigkeit vereint, in der aber doch das ökonomische (bürgerliche) Moment das den Lebensstil im ganzen bestimmende wird," pp. 29-30. See also: Herman Kellenbenz, "Die Unternehmerische Betätigung der verschiedenen Stände während des Ubergangs zur Neuzeit," Vierteljahrschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte, 44 (1957), 6 (hereafter this journal will be cited as VfSW); and Peter Schmidt, Luther und der Klassenkampf (St. Gallen, 1933), p. 30.

If, then, the conflict between the nobles and the rising bourgeoisie was not that severe, as even some Marxists have admitted, and if, further, there was no real conflict between the 'modes of production' in the period of transition from feudalism to commercial capitalism, what was the true nature of the relationship between the bourgeoisie of the time and the Peasant War? The answer to this crucial question, of course, will determine whether or not Reformation and Peasant War constituted an early phase of the bourgeois revolution. There are certain instances in which cities did come into contact with the revolutionary peasants, but these are few in number. In

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[3] "Les Français appelent histoire moderne de l'Europe, celle de la prode qui s'étend entre la Renaissance et la Révolution.

"Cette périod possède, du point de vue de l'histoire économique, une certaine unité. Elle correspond à l'ère du capitalisme commercial . . . ." Frédérico Mauro, "Pour une théorie du capitalisme commercial," VfSW, 42 (1955), 117.

Heilbronn, Schweinfurt, Regensburg, Nordhausen, Rothenburg o.d.T., and in Mühlhausen under Müntzer,[4] as well as in the larger cities of Prussia,[5] such contacts between the insurgent peasants and the cities were effected. But only in Mühlhausen did it come to a closer working together of the two. On the whole, the evangelical preachers of the cities turned against the revolt of the peasants, and even where the party of reform was in opposition to the city council, as in Schwäbisch-Gmünd for example, it consciously disassociated itself from the Peasant War.[6] But even the connections that did exist were not brought about because of a similarity of aims, rather the example of the peasants encouraged the city bourgeoisie to rise in its own cause.[7] At the most, therefore, one can speak in terms of parallel risings, as Macek did, and not of any integral relationship between the two movements. The peasant aims remained peasant aims and the Peasant War remained a Peasant War.[8]

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[4] Bernd Moeller, Reichsstadt und Reformation (Gütersloh, 1962), p. 21.

[5] F.L. Carsten, "Der Bauernkrieg in Ost Preussen 1525," p. 406.

[6] Moeller, Reichsstadt und Reformation, p. 21.

[7] "Das deutsche Volk, d.h. seine politisch massgebenden Schichten, vor allem im Fürsten—und Städtestand, wollte als Ganzes gar nicht gross und mächtig sein, seine politische Kraft wandte sich immer nur auf dis einzelne Territorium, die eingzelne Kommune, höchstens auf eine gemeinsame Landschaft . . . ." Carl Hinrichs, "Deutschland zwischen Kaisertum und Libertät," Die deutsche Einheit als Problem der europäischen Geschichte, hrsq. Carl Hinrichs und Wilhelm Berges (Stuttgart, 1960), p. 98. See also Franz, Bauernkrieg, p. 296.

Because the Marxists postulate an integral relationship between peasant and bourgeois movements, and because they consider the Reformation merely the ideological expression of the bourgeois movement, they can assert that the back of the Reformation was broken with the defeat of the peasants. We have already seen that Franz Lau has given the lie to this theory by demonstrating that the Lutheran Reformation continued to capture city after city in Northern Germany for some time after the defeat of the peasants.[9] Bernd Moeller has pointed out that this does not only hold true for Northern Germany but also, and especially, for the free cities of Southern Germany.[10] Nor were the transitions from Catholicism to Protestantism in these cities the product of the town councils but much rather of the citizens themselves, very often in opposition to the town councils.[11]

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[8] ". . . Aufs Ganze gesehen bleibt es bedeutungsvoll, dass der Bauernkrieg eben Bauernkrieg geblieben ist." Moeller, Reichsstadt und Reformation, p. 21.

[9] Lau, "Das angebliche Ende der Reformation," pp. 109-34.

[10] Moeller, Reichsstadt und Reformation, pp. 22-23.

[11] Ibid., p. 24. ". . . Die Feststellung von Franz Lau ist für ganz Deutschland gültig: 'Es gibt keine Ratsreformation.' Nur hat in einigen Reichsstädten der Rat von Anfang an oder doch nach nur kurzem Zögern die aus dem Volk kommenden Impulse aufgenommen und die Reformation rasch und geradlinig zum Sieg geführt . . . ."

Consequently not only did the Reformation as a *Volksbewegung* not cease with the defeat of the peasants, but the outcome of the Peasant War seems to have had little influence one way or another on the progress of the Reformation in the cities; only where the princes used the pretext of bourgeois complicity in the Peasant War to attack the cities, or, on the other hand, where, as in the case of Mühlhausen, the city had become directly involved in the struggle did the Peasant War affect the Reformation movement in the cities.[12] These facts would certainly seem to negate the Marxist theory of the common aims as well as the theory of the integral relationship between the two movements.

The whole Marxist theory of the *frühbürgerliche Revolution* seems, therefore, to have little, if any, relevancy to the historical facts and is more a figment of their imagination rather than it rests on any 'material' or other 'real' base. The Marxists have been caught in a web of their own spinning and are now attempting to reconcile the historical facts with their finely spun theory. We have seen what the consequences can be in the chapter on Thomas Müntzer. From the proto-communist as Engels had portrayed him, the

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[12] *Ibid.*, pp. 21-22. Moeller points to the interesting fact that Mühlhausen and Nordhausen, both centers of the Müntzer revolt, returned to Catholicism after the defeat of the peasants by request of the populace. Note 16, p. 21.

Marxists have gradually transformed Müntzer into the radical bourgeois reformer, who had recognized the stage of the historical dialectic, in order to fit him into their ever maturing theory of the frühbürgerliche Revolution. At the same time they still claim to be true to Engels. In fact, however, they are caught between the early and the late Engels and have attempted to reconcile the two without admitting that the Müntzer Engels conceived was not the Müntzer pregnant with bourgeois ideas. Precisely what role the objective historical facts have played in the process, the Marxists conveniently omit to tell us.

The theory that the Reformation was a bourgeois movement is older than the Marxists, however. The Marxists have merely taken over the theory, as so much else of the 19th-century liberal bourgeois thought, and have forced it into their dogmatic mold. The theory obviously developed in the 19th century out of an attempt by the liberals to remake Luther and the Reformation in their own image as the great liberating force at the crossroads of the Middle Ages and Modernity. For Zimmermann and his sympathy for the peasant cause, however, Luther had stopped half-way; others, however, had pursued Luther's revolutionary thought to its logical conclusion. This view was the result of a political orientation and a peasant perspective and, as a result, Zimmermann saw what Luther had done and what some of the objective results of these actions had been; he failed to understand, however, why Luther had acted as he had.

This one-sidedness is very apparent in the Marxists as well, perhaps even more so because it is dogmatically grounded. Hence Max Steinmetz can accuse the West German Church historians of *falsifying* Reformation history into a ". . . strictly theological phenomenon . . . ."[13] Bernd Moeller has pointed out that there is a great deal of truth in this accusation;[14] nevertheless the accusation as it stands stems from a viewpoint much more exclusive than the viewpoint of the Church historian, for in the final analysis it denies the ultimate force of ideas in history and attempts to explain the latter through social phenomena, whereas the theologian dealing with the conflict of ideas forgets to trace their effects on the social stratas or its modification by these stratas. The problem, however, has two aspects and the Marxists demonstrate their one-sidedness only too openly when they call the Reformation an early phase of the bourgeois revolution and try to explain Luther's thought as a result of this revolution.

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[13] Max Steinmetz, "Probleme der frühbürgerlichen Revolution," *Frühbürgerliche Revolution*, p. 32.

[14] "Jedem, der die gegenwärtige Lage in der Erforschung des Reformationszeitalters in Deutschland etwas eingehender studiert, muss ein eigentümlicher Tatbestand ins Auge fallen: Die Beschäftigung mit dieser Zeit ist unter den nichttheologischen Historikern im deutschen Sprachgebiet, von Göttingen und einigen anderen erleuchteten Orten abgesehen, ganz in den Hintergrund getreten . . . ." Bernd Moeller, "Probleme der Reformationsgeschichtsforschung," *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte*, LXXVI (1965), III/IV, 246.

But if the Marxist view is one-sided, there must be some truth in it. Certainly, as Moeller has pointed out on the basis of a comprehensive survey of the secondary literature on the subject, the cities became the home of the Reformation,[15] and this often in spite of the opposition of the ruling patrician class which either left after the inauguration of the Reformation or remained to constitute the center of the Catholic opposition.[16] Often the demand for a Lutheran minister went hand in hand with demands for social reform, but Moeller indicates that this conjunction of demands sooner hindered than expedited the progress of the Reformation.[17] Indeed, he proceeds to show that most often the bourgeoisie desired the Reformation for purely religious reasons.[18] This, of course, the Marxists cannot understand.

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[15] Moeller, Reichsstadt und Reformation, p. 22.

[16] *Ibid.*, p. 27.

[17] *Ibid.*, p. 22.

[18] *Ibid.*, pp. 28-32.

The Reformation did not only conquer the cities, however, for at least until 1525 the peasants in many regions of Germany, if not in all, considered themselves the carriers of Luther's teachings and his chief supporters.[19] This would indicate that there was nothing innately antagonistic between the peasantry and Luther's teachings, quite on the contrary.[20] The reasons for the disillusionment of the peasants, to the extent it actually occurred, lies elsewhere, in their defeat and in Luther's denunciation of their cause. But, as we have seen in Chapter VII, not even this denunciation can be termed a bourgeois act.

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[19] Uhrig, "Der Bauer in der Publizistik." See also Harold J. Grimm, "Social Forces in the German Reformation," CH, XXXI (1962), 8. Even Gerhard Brendler has stated: ". . . Die Reformation—auch die Reformation Luthers!—war Jahrelang vorwiegend eine Sache des Volkes, die vom Volke gegen die Obrigkeit vertreten und zum Siege geführt wurde . . . ." Das Täuferreich zu Münster, p. 63.

[20] Harold Grimm has pointed to the fact that many different estates made use of Luther's ideas in perverted form. "In the second place, the principles evolved by the reformers in their struggles to maintain their beliefs were applicable in other areas of thought and action, while their slogans could be taken over by social and political groups in promoting their respective reform programs. For example, the word 'liberty,' so effectively used by Luther in his widely read pamphlets, was employed by the German territorial princes and free imperial cities in their struggles with the emperor, by nobles and towns in their conflicts with territorial rulers, by peasants in their revolts against feudal landlords, and by the lesser townsmen in their opposition to the ruling classes of the cities and towns . . . ." Ibid., p. 6.

Not only, however, did Lutheranism find a broad response in the peasants and the townsfolk, princes and patricians also joined its ranks and this not merely for selfish material reasons.[21] The Marxist argument that one prince remained Roman Catholic because he hoped to extend his power by doing so while another turned Protestant for the same reason is merely a poor attempt to rationalize their way out of a predicament of their own making. The cardinal point, of course, is that there were men and women in all walks of life who chose to espouse Protestantism, and precisely this phenomenon the class approach to the problem fails to explain. And if this is so, as it manifestly is, then Lutheranism was not the ideology of any one class, otherwise we would have to argue with the Marxists that those of other classes who espoused Lutheranism did not recognize their real class interests or, on the other hand, merely used it behind which to hide these class interests. But if we argue this way then we will have to agree with Engels that Luther's teachings had not gone beyond the previous bourgeois heresies. To do so, however, would only be to demonstrate our ignorance about Luther's thought.

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[21] ". . . In virtually all cities there were patricians who accepted Lutheranism at an early date. Few did so because of purely economic or social motives and some did so despite them." Ibid., p. 10. "Whereas a large number of the princes became conscientious Lutherans, others adhered to Catholicism . . . ." Ibid., p. 7.

One of the problems is that the Marxists do not take individuals seriously enough, if they take them seriously at all. Were they to take them seriously they would not simply avoid and ignore, or attempt to explain away individual differences. But the fact remains that these individual differences are present and spoil the Marxist theory of class conduct.[22] Once it is admitted that the theory does not hold true in all cases, then one has to begin to seek for the motives in concrete historical instances; and if it is not true that all people are in the final analysis motivated by economic and social forces then perhaps a variety of forces might even be at work. Therefore, rather than argue about how Engels should be interpreted, the Marxist should begin to attempt more ideologically unencumbered studies of specific historical instances.

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[22] "When it came to creating unions of knights, however, it became apparent that little agreement could be found with regard to a positive program of action. Although the knights were convinced of the need of coöperation in preserving their estate, they were hopelessly divided by their territorial, economic, and religious differences . . . ." *Ibid.*, p. 8.

Precisely this, however, the Marxist will not do. Therefore he justifies his one-sided approach to history with the argument that all history is parteilich.[23] Since this is true, the Marxist can proceed to use history for propaganda purposes to further the cause of that class his fantasy has ordained shall inherit the earth. Thus what began as a search after truth has ended as propaganda.

If the Marxists have erred in their analysis of the Reformation era, what was the nature of the relationship between Peasant War, bourgeois revolts in the cities, and the Reformation as an intellectual movement? Peasant wars and bourgeois revolts in the cities had been going on more or less independently of one another long before Luther appeared on the scene. Hence, according to Marxist theory, these must have been bourgeois and peasant movements without a bourgeois or peasant revolutionary ideology. The weakening of the central monarchy had been proceeding apace as had the consolidation of territorial power by the princes before ever Luther turned into a princely hireling. Conflicts between these territorial powers and the various other estates, or conflicts between the various estates themselves, had been present. The rise of commercial capitalism had certainly added its share to the conflicts of the time, but Luther was not the champion of capitalistic fiscal policies as much as the Roman Catholic Church was, despite the fact that she had a heavy stake in the feudal system and condemned the practice of usury. Nor did Luther attack feudalism in the form of its ideological exponent as much as he attacked the Church's involvement in the things that belonged rightly in the realm of the mundane. Into all these tensions and social conflicts, into the sincere desire for religious renewal as well as political and social reform, came Luther's pamphlets with their religious conviction and moral indignation. Obviously the response had to be varied. Some modified these teachings to suit their needs, others used them to justify selfish ends, but there were those as well who saw in them the answer to their religious needs and who modified their social and economic positions to remain true to these teachings. In order to remain true to their old or their new faith thousands suffered death, loss of property, and many fled to safer territories leaving everything behind.

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[23] "Eine 'wertfreie' Geschichtsschreibung ist weder möglich noch wünschenswert. Die ideelle Reproduktion vergangener Ereignisse ist immer eine parteiliche, unabhängig davon, ob der Untersuchende sich dessen bewusst ist oder nicht. Der Historiker kann die in ihrer historischkonkreten Erscheinungsform unwiderruflich entschwundene einstige gesellschaftliche Realität nur von den Denkvoraussetzungen seiner Zeit und der Bewusstseinslage seiner Klasse her darstellen. Geschichtsverständnis schliesst mithin immer politisch bekennendes Gegenwartsverständnis ein und umgekehrt. Die Denkvoraussetzungen der Zeit wie auch die Bewusstseinslage der Klassen sind Produkte historischer Entwicklungen. So geht der auf die Vergangenheit gerichtete Blick von der Gegenwart und deren Gewordensein in der Geschichte aus . . . ." Brendler, Das Täuferreich zu Müntzer, p. 9.

Sixteenth-century Germany witnessed an interaction between Reformation theology, be this Lutheran, Zwinglian, Calvinistic, or Anabaptist, and the social aspirations of people from all the various estates of the realm. How this Reformation theology was received by the _individual_ must be determined on an individual basis, not by means of an abstract theory of class conduct. Much work still remains to be done in this regard, but it is obvious already that the different reactions within the same estate to Luther and his Reformation cannot be explained away, they must much rather be investigated. And if they cannot be explained away, the Marxist theory of class conflict has little relevancy as a category for investigating history. If these are necessary and logical deductions from an historical observation, then it must follow that the economic factor is not the ultimately motivating force in history.

CHAPTER XI

EPILOGUE

Not much remains to be said, for not only have the historical origins of the Marxist interpretation of the Reformation been uncovered, but the theoretical presuppositions of the Marxists have also been exposed. When one looks back upon the whole, two salient features of this interpretation strike one as outstanding. The first of these is that the Marxist interpretation was prepared by that of the radical liberal historian, Wilhelm Zimmermann. This was no accident. Just as so much of Marxist thought was an outgrowth of 19th-century Liberal thought, so the Marxist interpretation of the Reformation had much in common with Zimmermann's interpretation. The second outstanding feature is that the Marxists have been caught in a theoretical snare of their own devising and, as a result, have been forced into prejudicing the objective truth of documentary evidence in order to meet the demands of their theory. We noted that Zimmermann consciously misused his evidence in order to create his interpretation. This falsification was incorporated into the Marxist interpretation by Engels and has remained an integral aspect of this interpretation ever since because of Engels' prestige as a 'founding father' of Marxism.

Despite the differences from Engels' interpretation which have crept into the Marxist historiography of the Reformation, the dependence of Marxist historians upon Engels is nothing short of phenomenal. As we have had ample occasion to note, however, Engels was not a thorough historian, nor did he ever concern himself with even those published sources extant in his own day: he worked only with the interpretations of others. Nor did he do more than this for the revision of his Bauernkrieg, and it is a matter of considerable doubt whether he did very much even here, for on December 17, 1894, he wrote to Laura Lafargue, Marx's daughter: "Then the heaps of arears of my own. First the complete rewriting of the Bauernkrieg which has been out of sale for years, and has been promised as my first work after vol. III, [Das Kapital]. That requires a considerable study; I hope to do that along with the proofsheets. But impossible. Anyhow I shall have to look myself up how to do it."[1] It is important to note in this regard as well that in his last letter to Kautsky, after he had read the latter's Vorläufer des neueren Sozialismus, his criticisms were only two and these were of a theoretical nature.[2] The documentary sources Kautsky used must apparently have been new to Engels for he quietly accepted all the revisions Kautsky made with regard to his own Bauernkrieg. It is no wonder, therefore, that he wrote to Kautsky in the same letter: ". . . I have learned very much from your book; it was an imperative prerequisite for the revision of my Bauernkrieg . . . ."[3]

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[1] Correspondence, III, 376. In the same letter Engels indicated where his true interests lay: "I have followed the movement [worker's] in five large and a lot of small European countries and the U.S. America. For that purpose I receive 3 German, 2 English, 1 Italian dailies and from Jan. 1 the Vienna daily, 7 in all. Of weeklies I received 2 from Germany, 7 Austria, 1 France, 3 American (2 English, 1 German), 2 Italian, and 1 each in Polish, Bulgarian, Spanish and Bohemian, three of which in languages I am still gradually acquiring. Besides that, calls of the most varied sort of people (. . .) and an ever increasing crowd of correspondents, more than at the time of the International! many of whom expect long explanations and all of them taking away time. With all this and the 3rd. vol., I have not, even during the proof-sheet-time, that is the whole of 1894, been able to read more than one book."

The theory of history Engels consciously applied to an interpretation already tending in the direction of the radicalism Marxism was to manifest has, to a high degree, become the cause for the rigidity of the Marxist interpretation of the Reformation. This is due in a large part to the Marxist emphasis upon inductive reasoning from the documentary evidence only within their given theoretical frame of reference. No matter, therefore, what new evidence may be produced, the theory of history remains the most important element in the Marxist interpretation, for it and it alone gives meaning and coherence to the isolated facts of history.

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[2] Engels to Kautsky, May 21, 1895, E/K, Briefwechsel, p. 435.

[3] Ibid.

But from our analysis of the historiography of the Marxist interpretation of the Reformation it has become only too obvious that the Marxist theory has come into conflict with the historical evidence. Therefore the historical evidence has had to be tampered with, or 'interpreted' correctly.

This Marxist theory of history, however, was drawn from Marx and Engels' criticism of 19th-century industrial society, a society quite different from that of 16th-century Reformation Germany which it has been made to explain. Perhaps the chief differences of the two eras was their outlook on life: that of the Reformation was religiously oriented whereas that of the 19th century, and especially that of the Rationalists and Marxists, was secularly oriented. Yet, as has been noted, the Marxists' hope for a better future was in many ways a secularization of the Christian eschatological hope. This, of course, explains the Marxist attraction to, and glorification of Thomas Müntzer.

From the non-Marxist point of view, however, a point of view which advocates the interpretation of an historical epoch in the terms of that epoch, the Marxist interpretation of history is unacceptable. Nor does the Marxist assertion that it is an interpretation which takes party for the proletarian class of the future justify it in the eyes of non-Marxist historians. This assertion is in fact a misguided error, for the Marxist theory of history is not a theory by which one is able to determine scientifically the future course of historical events; it is much rather a theory based on a certain concept of man and certain sociological-historical categories derived from 19th-century industrial society. Therefore, it is anarchronistic to apply it to any but Marx and Engels' contemporary society. And even here one should exercise the utmost caution and divest it of its philosophical presuppositions before applying it in an analysis of this 19th-century society.

APPENDIX A

A comparison of Muntzer's articles of faith as given by Zimmermann and as given by Sebastian Franck quoted by Strobel, Müntzer, pp. 188-194.

(See following fold-out pages 638 through 641.)

Sebastian Franck	Zimmermann
1. Alle Papistische und vermeinte Evangelische Prediger sind Schriftgelehrte, die allein von der Schrift und nicht von Gott weder gelehrt noch gesandt sind. Alle Prediger auf einen Haufen seyen Schriftgelehrte, die ihr Evangelium nicht von Gott, sondern von der Schrift empfangen haben. Dass kein Schriftgelehrter beruffen sey, noch des lebendigen Gottes Wort habe noch predige, sondern den todten Buchstaben der Schrift. Er hält nichts von der Schrift oder dem äusserlichen Wort, dass der Glaub dadurch komme oder gegeben werde, sondern von der himmlischen Stimme und lebendigen Worte Gottes; darum er von vielen ein himmlischer Prophet spottweise, von etlichen seiner Jünger ernstlich ist genennt worden.	
2. Man muss nicht durch Bücher oder Predigt, sondern von der Lebendigen Stimme Gottes gelehrt werden, und von dem innern himmlischen Wort. Dass alle Predigt oder Lesen vergebens sey, wo nicht zuvor der Mensch Christum in seinem Herzen hab predigen hören. Dass die unversuchten Prediger nicht Gottes Wort predigen, wenn sie gleich eitel Schrift predigen, wo sie nicht von Gott dazu berufen und getrieben sind, und das Wort, so sie predigen, in ihnen lebe, das sie im Grund ihrer Seelen empfunden und erfahren haben.	
3. Man soll die schuldige Plicht der Ehe nicht zahlen, man habe dann eine Stimme vom Himmel gehört, dass aus diesem ehelichen Werk ein gut auserwählt wolgefällig Kind werde, und läst sich merken, als sey der Welt und viel der Geistlichen Ehe nichts dann eine erbare Hurerey.	
4. Das lebendig machende Wort sey, das ohne Mittel von dem Mund Gottes ausgehe und nicht, das aus den Büchern gestohlen wird, weil Moses Deuter. 8. spricht, das ausgehet aus dem Mund Gottes, und nicht vom Mund der Menschen oder Büchern.	1. Nicht aus Büchern Gestohlene, sondern das aus einem erleuchteten Geist Ausgehende sei das lebendig machende Wort.
5. Das äusserliche Wort sey eigentlich nicht das Wort Gottes, sondern allein ein Zeugnis des lebendigen Worts, man müsse die lebendige Stimme Gottes im Abgrund der Seele hören. Gott redet zu unserm Herzen in aller Gelassenheit.	2. Den heiligen Geist habe jeder Mensch. Denn der heilige Geist sei nichts anders, als unsere Vernunft und unser Verstand. 3. Gott offenbare sich noch heute, wie vor vier Tausend Jahren; es gebe keine

Sebastian Franck	Zimmermann
Wenns nicht also von Herzen komme und entspringe, sey es ein Menschenwort, das die Schriftgelehrten verdamme, die die heiligen Worte Gottes also von Ihrem Nächsten stehlen, Jer. 23. Darum sollen sie Fleiss ankehren, dass man von Herzen prophetizire und weissage durch das einleuchtende Wort und lebendige Stimme, aus einem erleuchteten Geist, nicht aus der Charten des gestohlnen todten Buchstabens hersagen, sonst ist die Theologie und das gestohlene Wort Gottes ein Menschentand.	andere Offenbarung, als die noch fortdauernde. 1. Nicht aus Büchern Gestohlene, sondern das aus einem erleuchteten Geiste Ausgehende sei das lebendig machende Wort.
6. Man muss Gott nicht von weitem ausser uns, sondern nahe in uns wahrnehmen. Die Tafeln unsers Herzens sind mit fleischlichen Begierden überzogen, die da hindern den Finger Gottes.	4. Er lehrte, man müsse Gott nicht von weitem ausser uns, sondern in uns wahrnehmen. 5. Es sei auch kein anderer Teufel, als die bösen Begierden und Neigungen des Menschen.
7. Das ehelich Bett der unglaubigen und fleischlichen ist kein rein unbefleckt Bett sondern ein Hurenbett oder Teufels hurenhauss, Satanae lupanar, dero Begierden den h. Geist Gottes hindern.	
8. Mann muss den Mund Gottes fragen, wenn man die schuldige Willfahrt auch in der Ehe zahlen soll, damit die Furcht Gottes und der Geist der Weisheit von der viehischen Lust nicht ersäuft werde.	
9. Es ist ein greulich Irrthum, ein Fegfeuer Läugnen, denn die es verläugnen, dass sie nicht verstehen die Schrift, noch die Uebung des Geistes, doch der Papisten Fegfeuer ist nichts.	6. Es gebe keine jenseitige Hölle oder Verdammniss, und sündigen könne nur, was den heiligen Geist, das heisse, Vernunft habe.
10. Den Glauben mag man aus keinem Buchlesen oder hören erlangen, auch gebe ihn kein todten Buchstabe, sondern die himmlische Stimme in unsere Herzen, so man den zulasse.	
11. Die Ankunft des Glaubens sey, wenn wir im höchsten Unglauben beschlossen, und in Erkenntnis unserer selbst gestellet sind.	
12. Man soll nicht leichtsinnig sein, zu glauben, denn wer bald glaube, sey eines leichtfertigen Herzens.	
13. Des Glaubens Ankunft sey die Furcht, Trübsal, Zittern und Erbidmen von unsern Sünden und Unglauben. Also sey Abraham und alle Patriarchen glaubig worden. Jer. 36. Jud. 8.	
14. Schwerlich komme man zum Glauben, und wer bald dazu komme, der falle bald wiederum davon ab.	

Sebastian Franck	**Zimmermann**
15. Wenn einer sein Lebenlang die Bibel weder gelesen noch gehört hätte, könnte er wol einen ungefärbten Glauben haben durch die Lehre des h. Geistes, wie alle die gehabt haben, die ohne alle Bücher der h. Schrift geschrieben, und den Glauben beschrieben haben aus dem Buch ihres Herzens.	7. Jeglicher Mensch, auch ein Heide, ohne alle Bibel, könne den Glauben haben.
16. Die Schrift lehret nichts, sondern bezeugt allein, macht auch kein Wesen im Menschen, ja tödtet nur. 2. Cor. 3.	
17. Die Berechnung des Glaubens bey den bewährten im Glauben muss aus der Ankunft, und nicht aus der Schrift gegeben werden.	
18. Die Schriftgelehrten wähnen, der Glaube komme aus dem Gehöre, Rom. 10. so doch die ganze Schrift darauf dringt, dass wir müssen von Gott gelehrt werden, Joh. 6. Jes. 14. Jer. 36. Hiob 35. Ps. 22, 24, 33, 36, 70.	
19. Dass der Glaub nichts anders sey, denn so das Wort in uns vermenscht Fleisch und Christus in uns gebohren wird.	8. Der Glaube sei nichts anderes, als das Wort (der Vernunft und der Schrift) in dem Menschen wirklich werde, ein Gehorsam gegen Gott, der uns erneue, mit Kraft aus der Höhe anthue, die Liebe in unser Herz ausgiesse und den heiligen Geist bringe.
20. Dass der Glaub der Gehorsam Gottes sey, derohalben niemand glauben möge, und in der Sünde leben.	
21. Dass der Glaube den Menschen versetze von Adam in Christum und vernue, wieder gebähre, mit Kraft anthue aus der Höhe, die Liebe ausgiesse in unser Herz, den H. Geist bringe Joh. 7.	
22. Wo diese Stücke nicht sind, sondern noch alles alt wie von Anfang Lust, Wille, Werk, Herz, Fleisch, Gedanken, da glaubt man nicht, denn wo Adam lebt, da sey Christus todt.	
23. Die Schrift soll man dazu nutzen, dass man über solche trefliche Werke Zeugnis habe, und die Geister bewehre.	
24. Die Schrift sey nicht darum anzunehmen, dass sie von den Alten der Kirche auf uns kommen sey. Denn also bestättigt auch der Heid, Jud, seinen Glauben, sondern dass wir also erfahren haben im Abgrund unsers Herzens, wie die Schrift zeuget, und wissen, dass ihm also sey.	
25. Man soll nicht eher glauben, man sey denn des zuvor inwendig vergewissert in der Verwunderung.	
26. Die Gewaltigen müssen aus dem Sattel gehoben werden Luc. 1.	

Sebastian Franck	Zimmermann
27. Es muss ein ieder die Kunst Gottes, den rechten christlichen Glauben nicht von aussen hinein durch den Athem der Schriftgelehrten schöpfen, sondern durch das ewig kräftig Wort des Vaters im Sohn mit Erleuchtung des H. Geistes, und also erfüllet werden mit der lebendigen Stimme in der Seele nach der Länge, Weite, Breite, Tiefe u. Höhe. Ephes. 3.	9. Der Mensch werde hier auf Erden dadurch, dass das Wort in ihm lebendig werde, vergöttlicht, und so zu sagen der Himmel, in dem der Mensch versetzt werden soll, sei in diesem Leben noch zu suchen und zu finden.
28. Ob iemand schon die Bibel gefressen hätte, hilft nicht, man muss die scharfe Pflugschaar erleiden, und den Schlüssel David, der alle Propheten aufthut, überkommen. Niemand hat einen Glauben, bis dass ihn Gott selber gibt, und lehret in der Erfahrung unter dem H. Creuz in der Schule Christi.	10. Die Natur lehre, dass man dem Nächsten thun soll, was man sich wolle gethan haben. Solches Wollen sei der Glaube.
29. Allen Gottlosen und Schriftgelehrten ist die Schrift ein verschlossen Buch.	
30. Es ist erlogen, dass Christus für uns hat genug gethan, wie die unversuchten, zarten, wollüstigen Schriftgelehrten davon sagen.	
31. Versucht ist, der der Welt einen Honigsüssen Christum predigt, wohlgefällig der Natur, das heist mit den Türken in ein Loch blasen.	11. Er verwarf als unverständig und unchristlich die Lehre von der Rechtfertigung durch den Glauben allein ohne die Werke, als eine wollüstige Lüge die Lehre, als hätte Christus für aller Welt Sünde genüge gethan und Alles ausgerichtet.
32. Alle Dinge muss man im Grund der Seele erfahren, und den inwendigen Schulmeister zum Zeugen nehmen, was er gefragt zu allen Dingen sage wahrnehmen, und nach dieser himmlischen Stimme sich richten.	
33. Sagen, der Glaub rechtfertig allein, ohne alle Werke, item Christus hat für uns genug gethan, und alles ausgericht, ist viel zu stumpf und kurz geredet.	
34. Die durch den Glauben des Fleisches Lust und Ruhm suchen, dass sie frey vom Gesetz nicht mehr dürfen thun, und nicht so sauer werden lassen, die verstehen nicht, was Glaube ist. Der Glaube muss im Unglauben, der Himmel in der Hölle gefunden werden, es gilt erst Leidens, denn der Glaube wird nicht gelehrt und gegeben, dann unter dem Heil. Creutz, in der höchsten Armuth des müden, abgearbeiteten, erlegenen Geistes, der um gar keinen Glauben mehr weiss, und gar in der Tiefe der Hölle stecket.	
35. Nach diesem Kampf Jacobs und Uebergang Gottes kommet erst die Morgenröthe, also dass der Tag anbricht in unserm Herzen.	
36. Paulus hat uns gegeben Gewalt und Freiheit zu freyen und beyrathen, aber allein im Herrn 1. Cor. 7.	

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